

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN  
VISWA BHARATI  
LIBRARY

372

M92





## THE CHILD'S PATH TO FREEDOM





# THE CHILD'S PATH TO FREEDOM

BY

NORMAN MAC MUNN

B.A. OXON., CHIEF ADVISER TO THE CHILDREN OF TIPTREE HALL  
Author of the Differential Partnership Books, etc.

A Second Edition, entirely rewritten, of *A Path to Freedom in the School*, dealing with six further years of educational experiment.



LONDON

G. BELL AND SONS, LTD.

1921



TO HER  
WHO HAS HELPED THE AUTHOR  
WITH HER FAITH AND  
WITH UNSTINTED  
WORK FOR THE  
COMMON CAUSE  
HIS WIFE



## PREFACE

THE events between 1914 and 1920, and six further years of experimentation have together so widened the educational outlook of the author, that he now seizes the occasion presented by the selling-out of *A Path to Freedom in the School* to rewrite the book completely and make numerous important additions. The Introduction and the section on "The New Discipline" are entirely new, and so is all the matter describing apparatus and details of the application of principles of auto-education, as distinguished from the partnership method, which the writer's experience has found is less suited as the keystone of the educational process to boys under, than to those over twelve years of age. But so many insertions, excisions and qualifications have been made throughout the work, making it virtually a new book, that readers of the older edition are asked to have the patience to read through even those few parts which look familiar, in justice to the fruits of a more mature experience.

The author's thanks are renewed to those most inspiring and honourably early pioneers, Mr. Edmond Holmes and Professor Culverwell, and to all those, including especially Lord and Lady Glenconner, who helped him to put his ideas into practice at Tiptree Hall.

NORMAN MAC MUNN

TIPTREE HALL, ESSEX  
December, 1920



# CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . .	PAGE 7
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	II

## CHAPTER I

### ANTICIPATION

(1) WORK AS PLAY . . . . .	21
(2) " MAKING THINGS TOO EASY " . . . . .	29
(3) WAYS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING . . . . .	39
(4) THE NEW DISCIPLINE . . . . .	51

## CHAPTER II

### REALIZATION

(1) EXIT CLASS TEACHING : ARITHMETIC . . . . .	79
(2) LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE . . . . .	89
(3) GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, LATIN—WITH A DIGRESSION . . . . .	101
(4) THE OVER-SUBJECT . . . . .	113
(5) THE BASIS OF REAL KNOWLEDGE . . . . .	124

## CHAPTER III

### THE CALL OF THE FUTURE

(1) SIGNS OF THE TIMES . . . . .	130
(2) THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE . . . . .	136
(3) FOR THOSE WHO ARE READY . . . . .	145
(4) TO THE FATHER AND MOTHER . . . . .	154
(5) CONCLUDING AMENITIES IN REPLY . . . . .	157





# THE CHILD'S PATH TO FREEDOM

## INTRODUCTION

EDUCATIONAL ideas that seemed startling in 1914 are hardly likely to perturb the world of 1920. Not only have men supped full with horrors, but through those horrors their vision has penetrated to primitive realities, their mind has grasped simple truths, understood in some sense before, but unrealized and unapplied. It is obvious that analysis and synthesis, the two great processes in the mechanism of thought, depend for their complete and successful application on engrossed interest. (That truth will presently be invoked to another end.) But great stirrings of the world's conscious and unconscious mental life under stress of a general danger mean something more than this. They imply the rapid presentation of unusual phenomena in many guises, fatally conflicting judgments and prejudices, the failure of courses hitherto considered good and wise and safe—and much else that leads men to examine more closely, and with less confidence, the foundations of their own judgments. Shibboleths and fetishes are more used in war-time than under normal conditions, but when not the

obvious gibberings of fright, they are used deliberately and cunningly by the analytic to deceive those who are incapable of independent analysis. The very excess of this trickery practised on the primitive (it may instantly be admitted that it is a necessary corollary to the making of war) luckily has in general a happier sequel. It arouses eventually hitherto unexampled distrust in the "crowd compeller" or "herd-leader"; it sets even the humblest, when many times misled and once really badly bitten, to wonder whether even he might not be able to begin to think his own individual thoughts. War is in some regards a narcotic with a violent reaction.

One has little fear on these grounds that people will for long, and in such numbers as in the past, accept theories formulated to the order of long-established habit.

The author, like others, is six years older than in 1914, also the year of publication of the first edition of this book. Those six years, both through his experiments in education and his close watching, as the supreme test of his beliefs, of the terribly engrossing drama passing before his eyes, have left him finally convinced that the world can be saved from still worse catastrophes only through its children, and this by nothing less than a new and fundamental conception of education, not as an artificial adaptation to the thought-habits and knowledge-groupings of their miseducated elders, but by giving them the chance to develop, from successive interests acknowledged, encouraged and provided for by their teachers, an almost new habit of exhaustive, impartial and suggestive analysis. (He need hardly add, except to satisfy those over-instructed people who think too verbally

and miss implications, that exhaustive analysis is laid stress on in this book, as the essential preliminary to, and in no sense as a substitute for, the gaining of the power of useful synthesis.)

He hopes to show later on the further and most significant rôle played in the moral development of the child by opportunities given for co-operative activities.

The passing of these six years has, he believes, given the author of this book a better measure of the forces of active opposition, as well as of indifference. The first edition, called *A Path to Freedom in the School*, was written under every circumstance most likely to rouse the feeling of pugnacity. This its writer has often regretted, and in the present volume he will endeavour to lay greater stress on the constructive than on the critical—although the critical must still have its place. Here again the times seem to help—at any rate they help those of us who have a sensitive tendency to react from the particular sorts of general excesses that they most observe in their times. And the writer feels painfully aware that there are thousands of people who like to diagnose a disease, to one who seeks, or even actively supports, a possible remedy. It is this class of persons which is perhaps even more dangerous to the cause of reform than the unseeing traditionalist, by obscuring as he does the undoubted fact that even among the lazy-minded there is undoubtedly a majority ready to accept widespread reform in the methods of education. And so long as those governed respectively by the interest of the pocket, by the fetishism of a tradition or of a social caste, by their own egoism and reverence for all that helped the “Me” into being, feel secure from the

pressure of a simple but direct-thinking and practical majority, they will hold the reins and continue to obstruct essential change.

Because in his earlier writings he acknowledged a deep debt of gratitude to the inspiration and encouragement he derived from the experiments of Montessori, the work of the author has been far too closely associated with the "Montessori method." This view should be corrected. The author, who uses in his own experiments much apparatus, but none of Montessori's, continues to feel something akin to adoration for the wonderful courage and creative genius of this great reformer. The detailed applications he could not, if he would, criticize fundamentally, for Montessori's real achievements lie in the province of those who deal with children younger than his own. But the Montessori movement in England threatens to become such a narrow orthodoxy, such an uninspired misinterpretation of a beautiful and fluid conception of the relations between educator and child, that he fears disappointment for Montessori, and, without the above qualifications, misinterpretation for himself.

The great difficulty obstructing the reformer in education is the apathy of the public with regard to "Method." The ordinary citizen is ready enough to consider the building of schools, or to pass swift judgment on matters of curriculum or of organization, but it seldom occurs to him that the method of learning is really the supremely critical consideration, which at long last decides on whether the child becomes a vital and alert thinker or a social deadweight, whether a creator or a mere unit in a general or specialized social herd. Now there can be no question that the more intelligent parent can directly help the more

intelligent teacher by expecting him and his fellows to show intelligence and interest in modern methods of teaching. The writer knows the headmaster of a famous public school who is dead to everything progressive in education and incapable of stating the psychological make-up of a boy in anything but a conventional and meaningless phrase. But as his interests are almost purely athletic it took time and patience to get from him the material by which to estimate his general intelligence and capacity. Parents should not be content to stand on the threshold of their headmaster's mentality.

This brings us to another important consideration — the measurement of adult intelligence as throwing light on the value of early education. There is an unfortunate tendency in this regard to argue in circles. Having taken a given classical scholar as reaching a certain high level among classical scholars, people are apt to confuse two issues and assume general human efficiency when they should only assume efficiency in the one specialized sphere, before proceeding to apply, politely and unobserved, tests for reasonable mental capacity relative to a wider ground of human endeavour. They would be sometimes shocked, and very often surprised, but the proceeding is well worth while. And if, after the shock or surprise has expended itself, the enquirer says in his mercy : " Yes, but we must have specialists, and specialists will always be weak in general common sense," the author must really protest, and must also regard that plea as showing the essential weakness of the education which produced both the classical scholar and his kindly critic.

This book aims at showing that the present system of class teaching by adults as the central method of

school organization cannot, on psychological grounds, be justified. It is incompatible with the now universally admitted view of the psychologists that children, like men of genius, do their work in the spirit of play.<sup>1</sup> Besides the class system, which no sane person will expect to reduce to its lowest limits in any sort of near future, there are three alternatives—purely individual work, group work among children numbering from three to five, and work in partnerships of two. All of these ways have their different excellencies, and an alternation of all, according to the grip on the interests of particular children, is perfectly feasible. In laying much stress upon partnership teaching it will, he hopes, be understood that the author is not attempting to introduce a rigid method, for in practice, as these pages will show, he has himself frequent recourse to both individual work and work in groups of more than two. Work with a whole class is, to his mind, occasionally desirable, and never essential.

The believers in a great extension of freedom for the child owe much gratitude to the new study of psycho-analysis. Not only have the evils of repression been traced and relieved by the removal in the clinic of the very suppressions which nearly all the old-time, and many of the present time, schoolmasters have considered it their duty to encompass, but we are probably on the eve of discoveries which will help to provide a rational analytic technique which can be passed on for use by the teacher.

The case for a widespread reform of method is now not only complete, but insistently convincing. Nothing

<sup>1</sup> For a full and convincing refutation of that old misreading of abandonment to creative work as a "capacity for taking pains," see an article by Andrew Lang in *Blackwood* for 1894.

is more typical of our times than that some of those who best realize the fact dare not say so, and that our educational press only expresses its heartfelt desire for change in timorous and obscure paragraphs, while its more prominent columns are filled with summaries of dull and meaningless gossip inspired by a Victorian reading of child psychology. Nothing is more wanted to-day than complete and fearless honesty, and it is heartbreaking to find the press supposed to be representative of scientific education practising a mean jesuitry and preaching incompatible creeds as though they were one. The Author would not mention this matter except for a feeling that there is grave and urgent need for a journal that will be modern and scientific in its ideas, and give outspoken and not *sotto voce* encouragement to that reform of method which appears to attract the diplomat more readily than the man of simple honest courage.

Some people talk as though there were two classes of teachers, the ordinary teacher and the revolutionary. But the past ten years have been so fruitful in fresh discovery and in striking experiment with defective, delinquent and normal children that it can hardly be doubted that we have reached in educational science and art very much the same state as that reached by medical science and art after the discovery of the circulation of the blood. There is, not only in England, but everywhere, a natural conservatism in the teacher; and for many a long year psychological truths will not be applied with the same courage and conviction as the truths of the natural sciences. Perhaps eventually psycho-analysis will achieve its greatest victory by explaining to the teacher how far his own fixations are responsible for this lack of receptivity of such new



ideas as have been accepted by every serious thinker of his time.

That flogging should still go on in some of our schools—quite apart from the wider question of the necessity of punishment—is, in the light of the study of morbid psychology, an unpleasantly grotesque instance of this failure of the schoolmaster to study the sciences underlying his own work. One of them once actually remarked to the writer in defence of himself that some boys liked being beaten! The writer agreed, but hardly dared to explain to one so dangerously ignorant of sex psychology the full import of his words. He did, however, try to give him the glimmering of an idea of the measure of his responsibility in the matter.

It is this sort of thing that sometimes brings one to despair—this and the endless stereotyping and the mark-keeping and the muttered punishments, and the ringing of bells and the dull games shop of the common-room and the common Englishman's contempt for all psychology and his instinctive dislike of children not cast in his own flat and unenterprising mould. All this makes one feel at times that there is little hope that the schools can be brought into line with the truths of the new psychology. But perhaps despair itself will do what nothing else can to spread the light and make wide reforms of method a possibility. The war has been warning enough. Every nation in the world has had occasion to lament the stupidity, inelasticity, the incapacity for exhaustive analysis, both of its leaders and of its most ornamental citizens. On tests, America found its soldiers mentally fixated at fourteen years old, and masses of European officers made blunders and miscalculations so infantile, and so

lacking in scientific imagination, that many of them could have been no older psychologically than the Americans. All this, when it is fully taken into account, must surely call forth a strong appeal for the better training of the mind. For the moment the issue is obscured by each nation saying: "Our schools at least made heroes." But it is obvious that heroism in face of physical danger has little to do with organized civilized living at all, let alone with the artificial restrictions of a school. Fighting is a primitive affair of emotion for which men show less and not more zeal as they become more highly developed in mind. Primitive heroism has, of course, its beauty in its sacrifice of self for its family, for its tribe and for its beliefs; but the history of man, and even the records of this one war, show it at every stage of cultural development both of race and of individuals. Our strong feelings on this matter should not hide from us the fact that war calls to the primitive rather than to the higher processes of our minds. The higher qualities find scope later, but willingness to face death, while beautiful in itself, requires no cultural environment.

The greatest of all our failures has been the lamentable lack of creative leadership since the war. Here is the true test of the world's education, and here the result is purely negative. The readiness of the peoples to follow any great imaginative leader is pathetically obvious, and appeared strongly during the brief ascendancy of President Wilson. Since then there has apparently been no one with the capacity to lead people where they really want to go. And here you have the essential difference between leadership of the ideally evolved sort and the leadership of a barren

and uninspired tradition. By "Leaders" we have generally meant in the past what the psychologists have called "crowd compellers"—and that is the meaning unconsciously accepted in our Public Schools. But the new sort of leader whom our schools cannot yet provide is that psychically free man who sees the deeper yearning of the crowd to be freed for higher things themselves, and knows from the inspiration of his own freedom how to set about the work.

This book, the greater part of which is entirely new, has, then, a more deeply felt purpose than ever before. When it was written in the early days of 1914, its author certainly had a conviction of the boundless constructive value in human affairs of the spirit of freedom. But the newer edition comes to be offered to a few hundreds or thousands out of millions who are despairing of the continuance of the better elements in civilization, and still more of their evolution to higher things. If this book brings one new ray of light into the darkness of the times, it will have been worth while; and if it serves to find a few more actual workers and advocates of the cause of increased freedom in childhood it will have given the author the full measure of that which he had any right to expect.

## CHAPTER I

### ANTICIPATION

#### (1) *Work as Play*

THE Oxford Dictionary defines work as "Expenditure of energy, striving, application of effort to some purpose." It will be seen at once that this definition is as applicable to a game of football as to the solution of an equation or the building of a house.

All young animals learn through play. As Karl Groos first pointed out, the play of a kitten is the purest auto-education. Each animal spends its period of immaturity in fitting itself for the struggle for existence—but always through movements that seem purposeless till we know the mature type which it will eventually embody. Similarly, the human being from earliest babyhood is learning to adapt himself, first to his purely animal needs, next to a savage environment, and thirdly to the claims of a complex and highly socialized world. But as nature's slow processes are much less recognizable in man than in the lower animals, apart from the influence of traditional preconceptions, the issue has in his case been much longer obscured. Further, there is the same regular progress towards a higher stage of evolution.

What is true of auto-education with regard to the simpler processes, is true of it with regard to the highest functions of the mind. If the reasoning power of man

provided the material for human education, it also proved a hindrance where methods of application had to be devised. Indeed, the idea of imposing a system of adult manufacture on the child may be regarded as an instance of misapplied logic. The syllogism might be stated thus :

I know everything better than the child :  
The child's nature is something :  
Therefore I know more about the child's nature  
than the child himself.

Thousands of years have passed without our perceiving that the child's own mind was the one exception "proving the rule" of our relative omniscience. That we could theorize about the immature mind better than the immature mind could theorize about itself is obvious. But self-knowledge, which embraces a thousand complex instincts and tendencies in addition to the mechanism of purely intellectual process, leads where we cannot always follow. In a profound sense a two-year-old baby knows more about the secrets of its own development than we could find out after ages of research. And we now see that in the first year or two of life there is hardly a wasted movement—hardly a movement, no matter how seemingly capricious, that does not play some part in the child's progress towards a higher stage of individual evolution.

Before proceeding to introduce the crucial question to be discussed in this book—the right of children to make more serious use of their play impulses—let us pass, to strengthen our preliminary case, from a low stage of human development to the highest—from the normal baby to the man of genius.

Now I made it my business two or three years ago

to spend some days in the library of the British Museum going through the earlier pages of the biographies of all those indisputably great men whose childhood was described in sufficient detail to permit of the drawing of definite conclusions as to their earlier tendencies. Nothing could be more striking than the almost invariable indications that these children were out of all harmony with the life of their schools, and the great frequency with which, in the light of a rigid and formal system of education, they passed for more or less subnormal fools. Nearly all found opportunity to rehearse some part of their future creative make-up by anticipatory play, which the slack discipline of their times fortunately rendered easier of achievement than it would have been in our days of highly organized work and play. I think of all the biographies I read with this object in view, only that of Robert Browning gave me the impression of a really harmonious adaptation to the educational system of his times. And even he had glorious hours of æsthetic refreshment in the Dulwich Gallery on his half-holidays (nowadays given up to compulsory cricket and football). I had throughout this little course of reading the dreadful feeling that few of my heroes could have passed with full faculties through the narrow meshes of the schools of the twentieth century.

Many good people are apt to proclaim that schools are not founded for men of genius. But surely until they are principally founded with an eye to the genius that is in all men, they have missed the one ideal that can be truly called great.

But I have drifted from the discussion which led to these few words about men of genius. The point

was that babies learned and grew healthily through play, and now we have the striking fact that so do really great men. And most significant fact of all is that the great man goes on playing to his latest years. It is inconceivable that Michael Angelo could have painted, or Shakespeare written, or Wagner composed to a set routine.

Genius humanly at its best, and not commonness non-humanly at its worst, should give us the end to set before us. Genius humanly at its best appears in Leonardo da Vinci. The man who can be supreme in two or three great arts or sciences shows not only greatness but true normality, because he embodies balance and harmony. You can have subnormality in a majority and normality in a small minority—and Leonardo was of the normal minority which in kind, though probably not in degree, might, with proper evocation in childhood, become a majority. Remember those poignantly significant words of the Swedish poet Rydberg: "When we behold children we suspect there are princes, but as to the kings, where are they?"

The baby plays its way to wisdom and stature, and so does the genius. That is suggestive. Can we go yet further? What of the ordinary intermediate in age, while still in possession of those normal potentials of genius, the incidence of which is admittedly so much more frequent in childhood than in later life?

Until a few years ago it would have been difficult to answer this question with any confidence. Therefore one had either frankly to admit one's ignorance, or else to juggle with a psychology largely based upon the merest assumptions. Thanks first to that brilliant interpreter of Séguin, Maria Montessori, and latterly

to many experimenters in four or five countries, the veil has been lifted, and it is apparent that there is the same strong tendency in the older as in the younger infant to work out its own destinies in its own way, and to be continually seeking means to self-development. What is more important is that it easily learns to prefer an ordered to a capricious progress towards the perfecting of its own type.

We may now finally take for granted : (a) the purposive nature of childish play ; (b) that the play tendency, as compared with adult conceptions of amusement, is of great elasticity and can be directed into channels of real profit in the social and intellectual development of the child ; and (c) that no external stimulus is required to induce a child to discover the joy of overcoming the most varied difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

And what, allowing our scientific imagination full play, is the full implication of this threefold truth ? In practice it means that the schoolmaster has innocently spent thousands of years in teaching children to loaf when they wanted to work. All they asked for was work in activity. The schoolmaster replied : " You must work in passivity or not at all. What you call work in activity I call play. And as I know everything it *is* play. And if you play you shall be punished." The strong, healthy children, rich in the work-instinct, full of strength and the will to create, saw no way to breaking the laws of their own being, and they refused. But others with a genius

<sup>1</sup> While the faint outlines of these fundamental facts of nature have been seen by many prophets in past times, it is only a pedant or a blockhead, or a combination of the two, who would wish to " queer the pitch," by stressing a fact of merely antiquarian interest to the obscuring of the real issue, that both educational theory and practice are reaching a nodal point in their development.



for nothing but servitude, bowed their necks to the yoke and accepted the terms—and lived happy ever after. Of the irreconcilables, some wrote great books, and many died in our prisons and workhouses

The great secret that was first applied completely by Montessori (if we are to join those who underrate Tolstoi's somewhat anarchical, but in many respects promising, school at Yasnaya Polyana) is that of Emerson when he wrote: "The secret of education lies in respecting the child." Montessori did respect him, respected him humanly, respected him, above all, scientifically. She watched every movement and tried to explain it, and, having found to what it was tending, encouraged it and taught the child to quicken its development. In her classes Montessori was self-effacement itself. She praised but little and she never criticized. Her advice was never imposed, and her inspirations were the reflex of the inspirations she had received from her children. There was no time by which a child *should* have learned to button its clothes or write "cat"—she sat patiently and watched for the moment when these things should come to pass. She showed the way, but she neither dragged nor carried, nor pushed the child along it—because she knew that the acceleration, while testing her own powers, would do nothing to develop those of her little charge. And she learned that the natural child, far from liking to be helped, would struggle with infinite patience to reach a self-proposed goal.

To countless thousands Montessorism appeared at first a fantastic paradox. Few people have a fair conception of true liberty—not realizing to what a remarkable extent they are prisoners within their own houses, and, what is worse, prisoners who have learned,

like some of the victims of the Bastille, to see their only happiness within their prison walls. To these, moulded to the idea of repression, and incapable of imagining that they would not have become either clowns or rascals had their activities not been checked in childhood—to these the idea of a free and happy childhood suggested little more than licence grafted on to the conditions of their own education. But here they were making a profound mistake. They had never seen a perfectly free child. *And there is no analogy whatever between the effects of partial and of complete freedom.*

It is to be remembered that liberty in the new sense means liberty in a limited and controlled environment—so that all arguments from the effects of mere general indulgence are quite beside the point. In reality general indulgence has no tendency towards true freedom, for it exposes its recipient to the hundred cramping influences—sometimes good, sometimes bad—of a complicated and highly artificial society. A person who was even inconceivably “free” in his relations with the world in general would be hopelessly fettered on every side. Montessori’s children marked the nearest approach to actual living freedom that had ever been attained, because the environment was so arranged that the natural activities of the young were provided for as they were provided for nowhere else.

Liberty without true activity—and that means for a child an adjustment of individual and collective activity—is a sheer impossibility. To ask a child to concentrate its mind on lessons learned under conditions of silence and inertia is to ask more from it than is, in general, in its power to give. That is why punish-

ments and rewards play so large a rôle in the administration of a school conducted on traditional lines—because we are inviting the child to contradict the first law of its own nature. And the penalties of that contradiction are being revealed daily by the lifelong neurasthenics who make the psycho-analyst their confessor.

Anything more preposterous than expecting a child to sit for long hours a day and listen attentively to the lessons of his master or to the questioning of his fellow-pupils does not exist. We ask a boy to be inert in precisely inverse proportion to his own inner activity. We would be sorry, as adults, even when we have learned to concentrate our minds on the most tedious of subjects, to go through the performance we count on from human beings at the most restless period of their existence. Sometimes, indeed, we get a satisfactory response, but at a cost even then that is far too great.

So grotesque, indeed, has this inert school seemed to certain critics who are also parents, that it has been asserted—and with scientific arguments in support of the proposition—that children would be better out of school altogether until they have reached the age of twelve. While I do not, of course, accept this impracticable suggestion, it seems to me that it does, by its exaggeration, point to glaring defects in our existing system. It means that there are scientifically-minded parents who believe that while school instruction is of the highest importance, it may be bought at too high a price.

Whatever is to be the detail of the remedy, we are on the point of realizing its general nature. It will be the remedy of work in play—the only kind of

work that nature encourages in her offspring before they have attained adolescence. The play need not be with toys, nor even be of the essence of a game. All that is meant by play is work done with such activity as to make a natural appeal to the young. Those who have experimented in evoking boys' real activities can tell us wonderful tales of zeal and application—can prove that the dividing-line between play and work done actively is so narrow as to be all but invisible.

And suppose we do discover that the admitted genius of childhood is conservable till manhood—that there is an avoidable wastage of creative effort? It is at any rate probable that with a truer evocation of individual creativeness throughout the school-life we could in a generation greatly increase the sum of creation in the working world. And this while simultaneously raising the general intelligence and increasing the number of willing workers. At this moment the world is crying out for leaders to lead it *in the way it wants to go*, and it cries out in vain. Our great men have told by their lives what few themselves realized, that the secret of great living lies in that wrapt absorption which we may truly call play. Until we take that lesson to heart, our work will continue to be half-hearted and the world will still be governed by specious nonentities.

(2) "*Making things too easy*"

There is one attack on the newer conceptions of education that we shall overcome much later than most others—that which lies in the proposition that life being a struggle, education must reflect something of

the difficulties that have to be surmounted in the outside world. Although I attach little importance to this argument against activity in the school, because it appears to be based on a serious misconception, it would be unwise to let it pass without discussion.

In the first place the urging of such an objection shows how far the critic is the victim of his own upbringing. *He was taught to regard work as something so opposed to play that it took on an ineradicably disagreeable association.* He cannot conceive work rendered so active and adapted so well to the nature of the young that that disagreeable association never has the chance to arise. A boy's "objections to work" are not really objections to work, but objections to work which does not give scope to his individual activities. Inactive work is abhorrent to him because it is to his deeper self a superior form of loafing, or rather an inferior form of loafing, inasmuch as it is neither for good nor for ill on the plane of his own share of development.

But if the critic means by "making things easy" that the subject-matter of the work must undergo great modification before a "lazy boy" will surmount it even under conditions of activity, I can only say that my experience tends to an opposite conclusion. "Lazy boys" can, and do, get just as excited over French verbs as over any game they ever played. And if it is urged that because the boys are lazy the work done must have been easy, I reply that the work is neither intrinsically more nor less easy than work under (for them) impossible conditions of inactivity. In short, they were not lazy at all, but too strong in natural activities to be able to substitute for them an artificial and uncongenial sort of con-

centration. Now if a boy is active in his work from infancy to adolescence, it is evident that he will have formed habits of attention more permanent than if he has absorbed his knowledge in a way to which he was hostile because it contradicted the laws of his nature.

Instead of allowing a kitten to teach itself in its own way we might tie it in a chair and let it watch other cats engaged in catching mice—but we might very well doubt the superiority of this over the older method of learning the art of the feline chase. In particular, I fancy the full grown cat's concentration on mouse-catching would have lost rather than gained by the change. Of course man is not a species of cat, as an over-clever but hardly penetrating critic would be quick to discover. But the principle of rehearsal and of adaptation is held in common by all species and a cat's lessons for humanity do not end with her regard for personal cleanliness.

If there were any deep truth in the views of those who would add to natural difficulties, no poet who had learned to write poetry for the joy of the thing in early years would be such a good poet as he who had forced himself, in face of profound aversion, to study and apply the principles of versification ; an actor ought rather to have studied than practised acting ; and the mathematical genius should have neglected those sides of his subject which most appealed to him and for which he had most aptitude. In short we could only end in a *reductio ad absurdum*, implying that the aim of education is to contradict the natural tendencies of the individual, and that capacity allied with inclination is the road to intellectual ruin.

It is preposterous to believe that disagreeable associations can ever have helped towards a better

method of work. Even childhood gains, of course, by the difficulties which are inseparable from work as they are from life—but to say that a child learns better because its conditions of posture and behaviour are forced and unnatural is to imply more than can ever be implied without landing oneself in a veritable quagmire of error and false reasoning.

All this is apart from the fact that the child has an extraordinary degree of concentration if once allowed to concentrate in his own way. And it has been equally demonstrated that this concentration is quite as striking in its varied application as in its intensity. The number of disagreeable household tasks a child will take up in a Montessori school and regard as play would be incredible but for ocular evidence. And once this play-association has developed, is it not reasonable to suppose that it will serve to increase the sum of cheerful work done in subsequent years?

For many boys the "difficulties" involved in the system of the taught class are often only apparent, and actual difficulties can be shirked at the cost of repeated punishment (the "dodging" of which also has its charm). With the newer ways to be dealt with in future chapters real difficulties are deliberately sought and mastered by the child himself. The mincemeat "exercises" and the like, the giving of such and such exact tasks actually do more to "make things easy" in a vicious sense than all the interest-methods in the world. They promote the ape, fetter the creative, and destroy even the amount of initiative necessary to intelligent ordinary living.

That many centuries of child study should have resulted in so little essential change in the method of teaching is one of the most saddening features in the

social history of Europe. Saddening and humiliating ; for after all the new message is only a sort of deeper good sense. All that is essential in it is summed up in the two words, "respect" and "watch." That the new education can shock so many is simply a demonstration of the large number who have neither respected nor watched. (They have not even watched ; for he who watches a child must needs respect—must inevitably believe in its extraordinary capacity for self-development.)

The word "play" must be freed from all common adult preconceptions of its meaning as the expression of the soul of the child. To ordinary grown-ups play is essentially something apart from the main business of life. To a child, as to the man of genius, absorbed activity is life itself. Far from precluding the useful it is the child's one conscious means of proceeding to useful ends. And once we offer him the absolutely useful as material on which to employ his energies he will welcome it with the same avidity as that which he had regarded as useful on the evidence of his subjective impressions.

Our scholastic system is based on a false analogy between the essence of concentration in childhood and that of later years. (And even in manhood it is to be noticed that we absorb infinitely better the knowledge which we seek ourselves than that which is imposed upon us from without. My mind wanders while a shop assistant explains a new typewriter. When I get home, I am all attention to its efforts to explain itself, and easily take in its mechanism.)

Concentration on uninteresting work is to an adult difficult, but not impossible ; to a child it is a contradiction of the laws of his being. If he is not interested



he may learn certain mechanical principles underlying the subject-matter of his studies; but he cannot incorporate their spirit and living force.

Does this mean that certain subjects must be left alone until the child is ready to take to them of his own initiative? Not necessarily, for we are helped by the versatility and power of adaptation in the young mind. There is no subject that carries with it the scope for active work (active with both individual and collective activity) that will not make some appeal to childhood. Any child that likes to overcome the varied difficulties of games will like to overcome the varied difficulties of school work—provided that he is enabled by a proper use of suitable material to overcome them in his own way. Often, indeed, one finds that the theoretically duller work ends by fascinating the most—because the essence of dull work is an accumulation of slight but constant difficulties. Taken rapidly these difficulties seem simply an exhilarating exercise; taken slowly and serially they spell profound boredom.

But suppose the boy did prefer to leave one quarter of his "subjects" untouched, and to devote his time whole-heartedly to the remaining three-quarters—what then? Surely the true educator would think little of it. The essential of education is at bottom very simple—to secure by the exercise of rapt concentration on a given field that habit of exhaustive analysis which is applicable as a preliminary to all synthesis. The matter for this concentration should vary with each individual. And with each individual, no matter what the formal expectations and provisions of the school, it always does vary. Jones minor "does" the Norman kings while abominating every-

thing about them, and Jones minor's knowledge of the Norman kings at the finish is almost precisely where it would have been if he had been allowed to set them aside for future consideration. Indeed, he is in worse case, for he has very likely developed such a phobia against all those kings that he will not start fair when he approaches them again.

A certain well-known educational experimenter carried his principles in the case of his own son so far that the boy, whose interests were mainly directed to the side of manual activities, reached the age of eleven unable to read or write. In spite of this, his father, against all the tradition which imposes a lengthy " preparatory " education, dared two years later to send him to a public school, of which, by the time he was seventeen, he was the head boy, a leading light in both work and play, and an acknowledged credit to the place. The whole of his early education had been carried out in perfect freedom and with no sort of pressure or strong stimulus. There can be few more striking instances than this in support of a child's free choice of activities.

In his now famous book, *What Is and What Might Be*, dealing with the elementary school which won him over finally to support the cause of freedom in education, Mr. Edmond Holmes shows how the teacher heroine of his book, disguised as Egeria, sent out into the world charming and courteous children who carried their enthusiasm for work into the routine of the wage-earner.

One of my own boys, aged 13, has just, of his own initiative, chosen to spend a week or two of his holidays in decorating a large portion of the house in which I write. The work he did was far better done than that

for which we had previously paid a heavy bill to trade decorators. Every detail—mixing and straining of paints, sandpapering of doors and windows, removing brushmarks, and all the nice matters for skilled attention that usually confound the amateur worker—would have surprised a master-painter, for one of these recently told me that “boys are not worth employing.” Our boy had the threefold advantage of not having been “taught,” of wanting to learn, and of being free to satisfy his own ideals of “a good job.”

Another of our little orphans, aged nine, was recently boarded out in a neighbouring village, where he insisted on running errands for a local shopkeeper. His “hostess,” a sharp, businesslike woman, said he ought not to do such work for nothing. But he refused to desist because he “liked doing it.”

Such incidents are common wherever children are allowed to grow up without that sharp differentiation of work and play, which alone brings about the general avoidance of effort which afflicts the world to-day. You can’t “make” a boy work in any good sense of the word, and by trying to force him you can quite easily burden him for life with one of the commonest and most disastrous of “complexes.”

It is a remarkable thing that critics who admit the rarity of whole-hearted devotion to work, hasten to warn us of the danger that love of work should pass away through things being “made too easy.” It is, in point of fact, no question of whether things are “made” easy or difficult; it is solely a question of whether the child has so learned to concentrate on an interest that he acquires the love of facing the difficulties first in that interest, then in another closely

akin, and finally in others of decreasing resemblance to the first. A habit of easy attention having been thus formed, the battle is won.

“ But how about little X. who hated Latin till I caned him, and has loved it ever since ? ” Nobody denies that the cane can introduce an interest through shock. (It is a mighty dangerous proceeding, and I would like to send the man who did it to a psychoanalyst.) Yes, it is one of a thousand shocks, pleasant and unpleasant, which can release sufficient concentration to prove that the most ugly-looking thing may have its interest. But no cane has ever done more, and the rest of the thousand shocks would have done that much better—and a good method would have dispensed with the need for any shock at all. The whole of this talk about “ making things easy ” is really nonsense, for the human intellect is only interested in overcoming difficulties. But the individual has need of more choice in deciding what difficulties best suit the exercise of his particular brain. And above all every human being has the right to escape from a cruel and pernicious boredom. To be bored is worse than to be merely in difficulties ; it is to a vital spirit the next worst thing to bodily torture. It is an accidental but lamentable misfortune of education that the schoolroom is with terrible frequency presided over by a bore—often by a bore who is excluded from all decent grown-up society on that ground alone. It is such men who cry out most loudly about “ making things too easy.” Shut out from social commerce with their fellow-men by their dulness and lack of all fluency, brightness, dramatic quality and mental penetration, they vent their spleen on rows of boys whom they torture with all a bore’s

tricks and peculiarities, from a dry cough to a sphinx-like smile and a narrow range of alternative remarks. These men do not make things too easy, but it is unkind of them to double the danger of their venom by assailing those who do.

"But you are taking an extreme case." Perhaps, but those who know will see a symbolic value even in the extreme case. And how many are the really interesting men—the men who have travelled off the beaten track, run up against real experiences, have a fine and expressive and varied voice, can appeal to childhood with a childlike note, and can tell the story of history or reveal the wonders of science in a way that thrills? It was partly because I knew that I had not all these qualities and that I knew that few other teachers had them all, and because I felt that only the rarest qualities could give the beginnings of an excuse for claiming the main attention of children for five mortal hours a day, that I sought for and I really believe found a better way. While entering no plea of innocence myself in admitting that I was myself highly sensitive to bores, I made up my mind that I would be no party to the nefarious trade of boring children for a large portion of their waking day. And as I did not bore them apparently to an exceptional extent, I included others in what some people have called my "sweeping statements about existing schools." It is a significant fact that those alleging exaggeration whom I have had the honour to meet would have to join me in a plea of guilty on the charge I have just referred to. Possibly their own failure to make "sweeping statements"—for one has to make very sweeping statements to be just to the wonderful, the beautiful, the terrible and the

absurd—helped to prevent their making things too easy in their own classes.

### (3) *Ways of Teaching and Learning*

The two main reasons why the master's teaching has prevailed so long as the central method in schools are: (a) that nobody has strongly urged any other, and (b) that occasionally, owing to the genius of exceptional masters, it was possible to introduce into it some shade of individual activity on the part of the pupils. But these flashes of originality in applying a method that can hardly ever have satisfied the understanding teacher have only served to accentuate its deficiencies.

The outstanding evil is waste; waste of time, waste of energy, waste of character, and waste of opportunity. We have wasted time, because we have had either to base our questions—we shall have to enquire presently why the master asks the questions instead of the child—on a purely imaginary average boy or else to individualize them to the loss of the other listeners. We have wasted energy because we are doing the lion's share of the work, thus depriving the boy of that active participation which he demands as the first condition of showing intelligent interest. We have wasted character for many reasons, but principally because we had little time to encourage originality and because our discipline, owing to the abnormal inertia of the class, had to be external and based on punishments or rewards. We have wasted opportunity because every boy carries in him the secret of his own mental growth, and we had no means of inducing him to reveal himself.

If we consider an average form, we are immediately struck by the variety of degrees of knowledge possessed by different boys. Nevertheless, all are set to the same work, and are even given the same quantities of it to master. Either the demand is based on the powers of the top, of a middle or of the bottom boy—but however it is conditioned it can never be ideally fitted to more than, say, four or five out of twenty. For another four or five it will be deplorably unsuitable, and for the rest it will be badly adjusted. If the evil ended here we might show a mild dissatisfaction. But when we have added to this a uniformity of method which has no greater degree of adjustability to individual needs than the work itself; when we see the clever boys tied with stupid boys for a sort of three-legged race with others equally hampered in their movements—then our disapproval takes on new force.

In this connexion, nothing is more distressing than to hear men who should know better endeavouring to represent present-day schools as places filled with teachers of a changed heart and a love of experiment. The author has several times been charged with having underrated the improvement of method in recent years. This is plainly a little innocent jesuitry—for everybody of the smallest capacity for analysis and power of observation and means of meeting both boys and masters, knows that experimental methods are so rare as to be far from falling within the reach of a majority of children. Again, employers of young boys are still finding a lamentable lack of initiative and a feeble power of analysing a simple idea. As for secondary education, old public schoolmen of high mental power who took part in the late war found

that the system had failed precisely where it had made its loudest claims. There was a depressing lack of initiative and intelligent leadership. The author has never written a line suggesting a denial of progress in the past twenty years: but he does emphatically reaffirm that progress within the limitations of class-teaching in the ordinary sense of the word must needs be only progress within, and at the best up to, insuperable walls. When I first had the opportunity of studying boys working in freedom, I began to understand the full measure of wrong done in the old way of teaching. The extent to which children differed in their method of work was surprising. In French, lazy but enthusiastic boys tended to work almost incessantly with their pen; others only wrote when reminded by their partner, and sought nearly all their knowledge through conversation. Under the didactic system no allowance could be made for this difference.

The actual loss of speaking-time available for each boy under the class system is immense. I presume that most masters have realized that in a French class of twenty, if they themselves speak half of each hour in explaining and asking questions, a boy has only one minute and a half in which to express himself!

To encourage originality is impossible where it depends on the direct evocation of the master, for he has the time neither to ask for individuality nor to study its manifestations. Indeed it is the troublesome side of individuality that becomes the greatest thorn in his flesh. And wheat and tares have to go together, lest the mechanical side of the work should be sacrificed to the personal and human.

English literature is studied in many secondary



schools—or was up to a year or two ago—by the slow reading of “books” recommended by the “locals” delegates—and the whole class must both read the same texts and maintain the same pace in their reading. No matter how much a boy longs to read *King Lear*, he must read *Julius Cæsar*; no matter how much Shakespeare he would like to read, he is nailed to the unceasing study of one play, from which, judged from his own point of view, he seems to have extracted all the sap. Every real lover of literature wishes that here at least the pedagogues and pedants would take their hands off, and allow things to be made “too easy.” Whatever else they dehumanize and desecrate they really might let the souls of boys respond freely to pure beauty without interposing their (symbolical) ugliness and mean measurement.

Any one who experiments on the lines of giving his pupils free choice among the best books will soon find with what extraordinary zest they read classics which would have irritated and discouraged them if supplied to them as “texts.”

Even with what is treated on the “set-books” plan, boys are delighted with the purely æsthetic beginnings of the work, and one could see at this stage a rapid evolution from the schoolboy (a monstrous type, infinitely remote from the uncorrupted original) to the boy of nature and of free self-development.

That any boy should regard either literature or history as a “bore” is the clearest proof of the deadening way in which they are taught. The idea of limiting history, for example, to the narrow study of a mere textbook is enough to kill in a boy even the most remarkable aptitude for his subject. Probably nothing fascinates youth more than full, richly coloured repro-

ductions of the past of nations. The "dramatic instinct" is strong enough to make him a crusader among crusaders, a baron among barons, and a bishop among revolting bishops. But he must have material to satisfy his imagination, and not be insulted by the offer of the lifeless chronicle of a self-proclaimed school-book. And different boys will seek different sources of joy in their reading. The boy strong of physique and full of a higher animality will revel in great battles and victories over overwhelming odds; a practical boy will see all in the light of invention and material progress; some boy cast in a more delicate mould than either will respond to a note of poetry, to a touch of pageantry, to a subtle interplay of personalities. Each benefits most by that for which he is best adapted; and none loses, because in the long run the roads converge and the boy emerges if with different (and, I hold, more valuable) views, at any rate much at the same point of practical acquaintance with his subject as that reached by his fellows.

In mathematics we have in an exaggerated form the worst evils resulting from differing rates of progress. If *festina lente* applies anywhere it applies to mathematics. The great probability is that nobody need be quite such a hopelessly bad mathematician as so many of us are if we were not rushed through a series of "rules" and principles before we had had time properly to master one. In no other subject is the laggard quite so much at the mercy of the proficient. I can dimly remember that I used rather to enjoy doing mathematical work on a portion of the subject that I thoroughly understood; but hardly had I had time to form this pleasant association than

I was dragged along till I was out of my depth—and had become once more the sworn foe of mathematicians and all their works.

There seems to be no obvious remedy so long as collective teaching continues to be the working ideal. Even with a system that pays the maximum of attention to the arrangement of forms and classes and "sets," the adjustment of the pace of different boys is beyond hope of attainment—the excessive "speeding-up" of one and the equally wasteful retarding of another is an evil innate in the traditional method of teaching, and cannot be removed until we have removed its cause.

But the worst effects of the collective method are of a more general character. They lie in the inevitable discouragement of originality, in the excessive prominence of the master, in the mechanical tendencies of the work, in the substitution for education in its true etymological sense of what we might call "injection" (or forcible inoculation with unasked-for facts). The greatest hope of the new school lies, I fancy, in using human material that has hitherto been rendered almost useless, and in showing that it may be the best of all material.

In a preceding chapter it was remarked that as early as the sixteenth century great teachers had proved to the satisfaction of their contemporaries that better results are secured when children follow than when they contradict the line of their natural choice. But whatever the moral support they enjoyed, they failed to induce any large number to follow in their footsteps, and experimental teaching has always been sporadic and localized. There is little doubt, as Quick has pointed out, that most of the

progressive theory has originated outside the ranks of professional pedagogues—and it is almost equally certain that new methods have hardly ever been welcomed by formal authority, or even by the fellow-teacher. It strikes the mind strangely to find Kant's great mind profoundly moved by playful methods of teaching Latin which most school inspectors of to-day would pronounce merely frivolous. It is the creative who would free others for creation; the imitative when in authority merely wish their own imitations to be imitated, because that alone leaves them safe and well-nourished. Of course, teachers have varied enormously in the degree of activity they have secured—from that attained by the sphinx-like, monosyllabic queller of the superfluous snapping of a finger to the joyous "big brother" who, within the mechanical limitations of time and of numbers, encourages every spontaneous impulse which is not hurtful or disturbing to others. But when all is said, teaching a collectivity suggests limitations much rather than a charter of freedom, even in regard to the most innocent manifestations of personality.

It is difficult, even now that we have a Conference on New Ideals of Education to help us as a clearing-house, to hear of all the experiments proceeding in different parts of the country. However rare relatively, they are absolutely quite numerous, though, with the exception of Mr. O'Neill's school at Manchester, that of Mr. Arrowsmith in Lincolnshire; the ever-memorable work of Mr. Homer Lane at the Little Commonwealth and our own venture at Tiptree Hall, most of these efforts to adapt education to the ascertained needs of the times are rather sporadic \*than formative, rather rebellious than in

conformity with authoritative sanction, and above all rather sectional than applied throughout the given school.

Mr. Caldwell Cook has done great service to childhood in justifying a wider belief in the frequent incidence of creative genius in early years by publishing the remarkable work of his boys. I rather think, from my own experience, he will find, as his experiments progress (very likely he has found it already) that there is no need to continue his practice of suggesting a subject for original prose and verse. The initial waste of time is well compensated for by the fact that the finding of the theme is itself a valuable creative achievement.

All these efforts to work some sort of new leaven into our schools are encouraging, but they leave the main difficulty untouched. It has been said that the newer ways demand so much of the teacher. Surely the system of ordinary teaching in class demands yet more, because there is the initial difficulty of its psychological unsuitability to an active childhood, resentful of physical and intellectual limitations.

To show the intellectual side of the case concretely, let us take an imaginary class of 26 boys (following the number of letters in the alphabet), and suppose them to be studying French. Tabulated: (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) could recognize at once the meaning of *Est-ce que vous avez vu le Tsar?* and each could reply to it after a moment's thought; (f), (g), (h) and (i) would probably understand *Est-ce que vous avez vu . . .*, but would reply in more or less correct French to an imaginary question about *le chat*; (j), (k), (l), (m), (n) and (o) will be able laboriously to piece together the elements contained in *Est-ce*

*que vous avez vu . . .*, but will be quite incapable of framing a reply ; from (*p*) to (*z*) the question will vary from a difficult puzzle to "double Dutch." But suppose, on the contrary, my question is *Est-ce que la porte est fermée ?* That question can be answered even by (*w*) and (*x*)—(*y*) and (*z*) seem incapable of answering any question whatsoever—but to the boys from (*a*) to let us say (*l*) the reply is as easy as saying anything in English, and therefore has practically no value at all.

My impression is that few schoolmasters realize the depths of hopelessness to which questions "pitched" even for (*m*) reduce (*v*) and still more (*z*) ; or the sense of wasted time produced in the mind of (*e*) when the question is based on the capacity of (*r*). Whatever the principle on which the interrogations are arranged there will be a misadjustment somewhere.

Now are these evils remediable so long as the master takes his class collectively? They are not. No amount of the most ingenious "pitching" of questions can remove the fact that no single question has ever quite the same value for any four—let alone twenty-six—boys. So that on top of the inactivity imposed by stress of numbers and of limited opportunity, we have the further crushing influence of inappropriate evocation of knowledge. At least half the form is always suffering by hearing questions that are either beyond its intelligent comprehension or below the level of its own attainments. To say that a whole form can satisfy under these conditions my demand for "a combination of individual with collective activity" is to allege what cannot possibly be true.

Thus all hope of a solution so long as we depend for it on the master as direct teacher of his class is

excluded. To whom, then, must we turn unless to the boys themselves? The idea of boys teaching themselves and one another, fantastic in 1914, will neither amuse nor frighten the thoughtful man or woman of 1921. The quiet, practical human being, well out of the way of old-time schoolmasters, will say quickly and decisively: "Why not try it?" A friend, who is a strong advocate of child freedom described to me lately a visit to the trenches during the war, and a subsequent conversation with a famous war correspondent behind the lines. They found themselves in agreement in the view that the present school crushed individuality, promoted inefficiency, and was the indirect cause of the failure of civilization to reach a much higher ideal. They had no doubt about the solution—more scope for the children in our schools. "In front of us," said my friend to the correspondent, "are a hundred thousand men. How many would understand what we are talking about?" The reply came slowly: "Few before this—but many would understand *now*!"

To revert. Let our open-minded critic's recommendation be accepted, and let the schoolmaster think out a method by which children can teach one another from material provided by him. Supposing that the material is psychologically apt, he will quickly convince himself that in that evasive phrase so precious to most teachers, "there is something in it," and if he persists, and, through growing experience, provides still more suitable material, he will find himself in possession of a great remedy for the inactivity of the school—a remedy in which he will every day find more elasticity and range of possible application.

In partnership work each boy makes his own pace,

each boy makes his own method—a wonderful method that nobody else could ever have invented for him—each boy frames his own work with the loving care of the genius he is when his own self-development is the prize. All this comes almost at once if he is not yet in the teens. Older boys are hindered not only by their adaptation to the other way, but by a herd sentiment that there is only one way—and that to depart from that way is to be odd and out of one's proper crowd.

I had this experience at the beginning in the second school of my experiments. All went well for a few days—in fact much too well to be promising, and without that beginning of “ragging” which is nearly always a necessary preliminary to the adoption of the new point of view by a stereotyped schoolboy. When somebody at last threw paper, I joined in, but was indignantly stopped by the freer spirits who were deep in their work-game. It was decided by vote (I being *advocatus diaboli* to the extent of suggesting a time-allowance for paper-throwing), that paper was not to be thrown for the future. This was all very nice and very proper and immaculately respectable. But there it ended. For the few weeks before I asked leave to change these decidedly conventional and unenterprising young gentlemen for their more vital juniors, ragging was rare, but they did not understand (or rather more than half of them did not understand) what the game was, or how it could be adequate either as work or play. As I have said, I asked to change them for others. The Headmaster, one of the most enlightened and understanding men ever in charge of a school (his death was a tragedy, for he had become an invaluable and inspiring link



between the old order and the new) asked to be allowed to find out the exact point of view of the boys.

That evening he met them with his secretary, who took a shorthand note of the proceedings. The conversation was remarkable both for the advocacy of freedom by the new converts (whose defence was reasoned as well as enthusiastic), and its polite but firm condemnation by the others. The head boy of the school, asked for his views, remarked: "It's rather flat: you can't rag." "But haven't you been told that there will be no punishment?" "Yes, sir." "You know all the time that there is nothing to hinder your ragging if you wish to rag?" "Yes, sir." "Then why don't you rag?" "I don't know, sir."

Now that boy did not rag in his ordinary classes—he was hardworking and orderly. Here is the sequel. Soon afterwards I was asked to take a French class which had been making life a misery to a charming Belgian exile. The extent of their teasing and disorder had been so exceptional as to call forth general comment. So they came to me with the ragging habit well established. Within two or three days they became one of the happiest, keenest and most orderly little groups it has ever been my lot to let learn. My headmaster had understood. (In fairness to the cause of freedom I must say that that first failure was the prelude to four years of progress and happiness.)

There can be no question that scope for free activity is apt to baffle those boys who have for a long period been either repressed, or, what comes to much the same thing, strongly impressed by insistent directing masters, who have perhaps let them face difficulties in one sense, but at the same time have weakened

their digestion and their vitality by feeding them with mincemeat from a regulation spoon. These, poor boys, are lost at first, and know not where to turn. Then they see themselves beaten by the "slacker" of a few weeks ago—now happy, free and soaring; and it is then that they begin to see that the wires of that cage are not impassable. But it is they, seldom that famous "hopeless" boy, who fly the last. Because there is no greatness in them. It is a miracle of adaptability when a great-souled boy can remain great and rise to the top of a collectively taught class. The best are not generally the best at adapting themselves to the wearing of needless chains.

I claim for these departures from the class system—to be dealt with fully and from a purely practical point of view later on—(a) that they are the only possible means of adapting work to the craving for activity of the lazy (that is, generally speaking, those boys who had in the beginning a particular love of rapidly overcoming difficulties); (b) that they alone can pay any real regard to originality; (c) that there is no other way of maintaining a suitable rate of progress for differing degrees of intelligence; and (d) that they are a necessary outlet for great gifts in the school-going period of life. Hitherto no single human being has ever been properly measured while he was at school, because nobody had a fair chance to follow the lines of his own development.

#### (4) *The New Discipline*<sup>1</sup>

I shall not spend time in trying to prove that the new discipline is really new. The people who seek

<sup>1</sup> From a lecture delivered at the College of Preceptors, October, 1916, by kind permission of the Editor of the *Educational Times*.

to prove that things are not new are usually those who have not the smallest intention of making use of them, whether new or old. Those who find the whole of our emancipationist doctrine in writers before the coming of evolution, let alone of scientific child study and of criminology, are showing an excess of false imagination on the one hand, and a grave lack of proper imagination on the other. I very much question whether freedom as we understand it—subjective freedom, the freedom that includes among its pre-requisites the emancipation of the mind from the trammels of herd-thought, from the eccentricities of schoolboy tradition (which so closely resemble the boy conventions of the Kaffir and other savage tribes), from the false kinds of *esprit de corps*, from the teacher's impressionism as well as from his repressionism, from the passions and the caprices of the *alter ego*—I very much doubt whether the earlier concepts of freedom included such varied elements as these.

In any case it will not take long to show that the older—one might say the oldest—view of discipline has still its votaries in high places. Allow me to quote from a presidential speech made by the ex-Head Master of Repton, at the Teachers' Guild: "The only true liberty is through discipline," he begins, with a very queer inversion of the conclusions of the most recent psychologists. To this strange dictum—and the context shows what Dr. Temple means by discipline—we might well oppose Dr. Dewey's view that "the school has been so set apart, so isolated from the ordinary conditions and motives of life, that the place where children are sent for discipline is the one place in the world where it is most difficult to get experience—the mother of all discipline worth

the name." Dr. Temple goes on : "A new-born child has practically no will. The elementary stages of education consist in creating will, the faculty of attention, which is the essence of will." Now to say that a new-born child has "practically no will" is just as true as, and no more true than, just as useful as, and no more useful than, to say that it has no intellectual or artistic powers, or that it has a negligible capacity to digest varied nourishment. But it is most certainly not true, but dangerously misleading, to suggest that even the youngest infant is not developing will power collaterally with other powers, both automatically and incessantly. To talk of "creating will" is like talking of "creating" good circulation or clear vision or sound digestion. As for attention, both science and even the most superficial observation teach us that a young baby is every hour teaching itself to concentrate in new directions. A trivial example by way of proof. Once, on the challenge of a mother, who had been harassed by her baby son's failure to put back the matches he had turned out on the floor, I set this infant, who could just walk, going in a minute or two on what afterwards proved to be weeks of voluntary practice at replacing them in the box. The mother, indeed, told me that he came greatly to prefer the act of restoration to the act of removal. And this is the simple way in which I gave him interest in the process. (I here showed my audience how each match was made to go through a simple series of evolutions prior to being placed in the box.) Now, I have only invoked Dr. Temple's views because this sort of talk, without the slightest suggestion that the talker has ever heard of evolutionary development, let alone of scientific child study, is

characteristic of a large number of quite representative English headmasters—and perhaps, also, because it makes one turn to the utterances of the newer school of thought not only with relief, but with a profound sense of their greater aptness and validity, both from the scientific and the immediately practical point of view.

Broadly speaking, the older discipline, which has found its *reductio ad absurdum* in the grotesque tragedy of Germanic subserviency, is static, passive, imitative ; the new discipline aims at being dynamic, active and creative. Prof. Kirkpatrick gives a clue to the newer ideal when he writes, in his *Fundamentals of Child Study* : “ Children, or even adults, are often checked rather than aided in their efforts to gain an end by attempting to teach them exactly what motions they must make in order to succeed.”

There are still many who believe that the severer, or even the severest, forms of external discipline were justified by evidence of success in the past. This belief is due, I think, to the failure to study social history as distinguished from the mendacious and misleading records of the general historian. There can be little doubt, to look at one aspect of this question, that periods in which the treatment of children has been characterized by great severity have been periods in which parents have failed to secure a full measure of the more real manifestations of respect and of affection. In the Middle Ages even marriageable daughters could still be beaten daily for many weeks, as was Agnes Paston. “ The result of these methods of bringing up children,” says Dr. Abram, in his *Later Middle Ages*, “ were not satisfactory. It is true that they [the children] showed their parents

more outward respect than children do now . . . but often these protestations ring hollow." The petitions laid before the Chancellor by aggrieved parents of the time point to a considerable lack of filial affection. Thomas Grey declares that he has been wrongfully imprisoned by his son upon "untrue suits"; Joan, the wife of John Affeton, asks for aid against her daughter and her daughter's husband, who have deprived her of the lands which were her dower. Some parents even complain of assaults made upon them by their children, who had learned the lesson of government by force to good effect.

One of the greatest evils of punishment is that it perpetuates itself through the punished child—indeed, universally through the punished human being. The horrors of the French Revolution were rehearsed when Damiens, the would-be assassin of Louis XV., had his flesh torn from him with hot pincers, and in other ways throughout an only just closing period in which indescribable tortures trained a new and suffering generation in the art of overcoming their opponents by inflicting pain. Stanley Hall's investigators have reported cases in which imaginative children, soon after being beaten by their parents, have torn the arms off their dolls with righteous zeal and full conviction of the justice of the punishment. Louis XIII.'s nature, fresh and generous at the start, was utterly warped and soured by his mother's conscientious use of unsympathy and unkindness throughout his childhood. And, by some strange fatality, French history was especially affected by the unsympathetic upbringing of its princes. A little book published a few years ago, non-tendencial in its spirit, and entitled *The Children of France*, casts much incidental

light on the effect of repressive discipline on the soul of the future ruler.

The evolution of the disciplining of children follows much the same lines as the evolution of the disciplining of society. "One of the most interesting facts in the development of morality," writes Mr. Delisle Burns in his *Morality of Nations*, "is that the 'sanction' of law has become less and less violent. We no longer mutilate or brand offenders, but the morality of individuals is not lower." While this truth—so cogent with the student of penology—applies to the general practice of teachers in successive ages, it must not be forgotten that Montaigne and Locke had in their times already condemned corporal punishment; that Mulcaster, while occasionally allowing it, thought "gentleness and courtesy towards children more needful than beating." But Comenius, perhaps, made out the case more eloquently than it had ever been made out when he wrote those words, familiar to most of us: "A musician does not dash his instrument against a wall, or give it cuffs or blows, because he cannot draw music from it; but continues to apply his skill till he extracts a melody. So by our skill we have to bring the minds of the young into harmony and to the love of studies, if we are not to make the careless unwilling and the torpid stolid." But the fact that the rule of the rod persisted with but little *adoucissement*—and sometimes with a decided reaction towards increased severity—until quite recent times is one more proof that the practice of the mass of teachers is but slowly modified by the views of the more enlightened exponents of disciplinary principle.

Let us try now to go below this evolution of method, with a view to finding the underlying theory of the

respective disciplines. Repressionism is really a curious reversion from the salutary natural law of "Live and let live," found in the treatment of the young of animals and, generally speaking, of savage man. Even the young of the carnivores, as Dr. Chambers Mitchell states in his delightful *Childhood of Animals*, are gentle and affectionate when they are young—and the predaceous animals are no more destructive than others, and destroy apparently from the same motive of discovery. That the young of a highly socialized species such as man should develop destructive traits that can only be overcome by physical violence seems fantastic, unless we attribute these traits to the maintenance of a tradition of force. Mary de Vore writes, in *Child Life in Many Lands*, edited by Dr. Trumbull: "I have never known an Alaskan child to be punished by its parents, and have never known or seen an Alaskan child disobedient or disrespectful to its parents." Parry, in his *Journal of a Second Voyage*, says of the Eskimo of Winter Island and Igloodik that disobedience is scarcely ever known, and that "a word, or even a look, from a parent, is enough." Domenech, in his *Great Deserts of North America*, writes: "The Indians who do not come into contact with the Palefaces never appropriate what belongs to others; they have no law against theft, as it is a crime unknown among them. They never close their doors." The Iroquois, according to Colden and others, looked down upon theft with the greatest disdain, "although the lash of public indignation was the only penalty attached to it." The same thing was reported among the Greenlanders. But it would take more than the whole period of this lecture merely to read to you the notes I have accumulated,



showing that to go to the savage is to learn how to educate efficiently for a given environment with a minimum imposition of adult preconceptions.

Why, then, did we fall into this habit of prescription and forcible government? Mostly, I think, through a misuse of the budding reason of man, especially when the pace of his cultural development exceeded his powers of accommodation to his new conditions. At a relatively early stage in civilization life began probably to seem hurried and difficult, while the cogency of "more haste less speed" may have been less appreciated than it is now. False analogy, first handmaid of error and superstition, would count for much. Obstructive human beings would be subconsciously associated with obstructive things, and, for a momentary gain in convenience, would be made to move at the will of the stronger. The value of the labour of children to the pastoralist and to others, again, must have brought about a new and still more dangerous view of childhood—must have tended to make the child more and more the chattel of its parents, a being who must justify his existence, regardless of the needs of his own nature, in his new rôle of feeder of his elders. These views—the product of a false practicalness—would enter, like all race customs, into the sphere of race superstition, and the forcible subjection of the child to the adult would be prescribed in the dictates of the accepted religion. Still later, and when intellectualism had begun its reign, but had not yet freed itself from superstition, the art of education would be applied with much voluble explanation and exact prescription to attempting to mould the child so as to produce immediately a docile replica of his parents and teachers. We see this sort

of child, marvellously dressed, a bandaged nightmare, stereotyped for future ages to wonder at, in the portraits of the eighteenth century.

Then came the intermediate period, which has so far lasted but a moment as compared with the age-long epoch of repressionism. The exponents of this ideal I will call, for want of a better name, the Impressionists—those who seek still to dominate, but less through force than through the imposition of their own personality. Thomas Arnold was a great exponent of this sort of discipline. Luckily, he also had some idea of boy self-government; equally luckily, his personality was ideal for his particular purpose; and, most luckily of all, he belonged to an age which was inferior to, and not ahead of, his own ideals. I do not, then, introduce a popular idol—one who was in so many respects worthy of being idolized—in order to try to upset his high reputation. All I would point out is, that there are thousands of men and women having the gifts neither of Arnolds nor of Thrings who aim at the more or less complete appropriation of the souls of those whom they teach—on the ground that Arnold and Thring have set them the example. They have not the excuse of living in an age like that of Arnold, in which little had been done either in the school or in society to prepare the way for the teacher's more modest and more observant rôle; on the contrary, they could easily have learned a newer psychology, which holds that initiative in childhood is essential to high ideals, and that domination—even of the most gentle and persuasive kind—is apt to endanger their realization. "My example," says Rousseau, "may be right for one child and wrong for the rest." If

example is better than precept, both, at any rate, have as a basis of discipline dangers infinitely greater than the giving of freedom for growth within a controlled environment. The impressionist spirit is present throughout the writings of Pestalozzi ; indeed, it may safely be said that, until Dewey and Montessori and Homer Lane, the concept of a free discipline was really the concept of a discipline based on a sort of sentimental predominance of the grown-up person. Even Mr. Fagin made some use of Impressionism in educating the Artful Dodger and his brethren, while Mr. William Sikes relied solely on old-fashioned Repression. In the past—and not necessarily the very distant past—people nearly all of course alternated, even in the home, between repression and impressionist dogmatism. I wonder whether the child Nelson's " Fear, Grandmama ! I never saw fear ; what is it ? " was a healthy appeal for information on a point of vocabulary, or, whether, supposing the boy was too young to be a prig, it was not a meaningless formula borrowed from some adult ? One's surprise that Southey could take it seriously and give it a deeper meaning shows how far we have already travelled. At the worst there is now some decency in our misreadings of the child-soul.

The impressionist teacher tends to eliminate all the joy of discovery and of ethical initiative by prescribing principles, citing adult examples, and indicating a narrow path of moral excellence. Regarded superficially this may seem admirable, even a counsel of perfection ; in practical working it is unlikely to achieve its ambitious ends. Two of its gravest defects are these : in the first place, it demands a perfected use by the child of a complex process, the simpler

elements of which are seldom understood ; secondly, it fails to make use of those natural forces which a child is quite as ready to employ to ethical as to other ends, if allowed to experiment with its environment and to measure his strength fully against environmental reaction. Which is the more likely to lead a child to be generous—adult lectures on generosity, no matter how skilfully disguised, or the experience of how one's companions react to selfishness?—adult precepts about telling the truth, or encountering the natural consequences of deceit? . . .

We have now said a word about discipline through repression and discipline through the impression of the teacher's personality. The third kind may be called, as you choose, discipline through emancipation, or self-discipline. What are its essentials? In the first place, it is based on the child's own acquisition of the art of living from his own experience of life. The precept is not laid down, but is left to be discovered from the event. The number of moral laws which do not prove their own utility in the ordinary life of a child can be safely neglected.

The aim of the emancipationist adviser is to see that the field of experience is large and in relationship with reality, and then to throw the whole responsibility upon the children for their own living, both collective and individual. We have to start with the rather bold assumption that adult aid is not necessary to the discovery of such ethical truth as is essential to good and healthy social life. Can this view be supported by evidence? Now, most savage boys—and I go so far as to say all the boys in the tribes which allow their children to grow up on developmental lines—hate lying rather more than any boy who has been

educated at the best public school in all England (whichever that may be).

The Veddahs of Ceylon, according to Bailey in his *Wild Tribes of the Veddahs of Ceylon*, are "proverbially truthful and honest"; the Saoras, of the province of Madras, always "own up" even in the case of murder, says Fawcett in his monograph on this tribe; the Gond tribe, again, writes Dalton in his *Ethnology of Bengal*, "will commit a murder, but will not tell a lie." Other authorities give a similar account of the Kandhs, the Hos, the Andaman Islanders, the natives of Car Nicobar, the Dyaks of Borneo, the Bataks of Sumatra, the Aleuts and Eskimos, and many others. A full summary of savage views of lying will be found in Westermarck's *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*. And how has the savage come to this taboo of lying? Because the freedom to lie has shown that lying is, as an American might say, an impossible proposition.

There can be no well-established relationship where you cannot trust your neighbour. Thus the warfare against lying, instead of being official and sporadic, is constant and the work of everyone. The same with theft or quarrelsomeness or cruelty. Anti-social acts threaten the security, not of an artificially made and seemingly theoretical rule, but of a whole society. I never use the word "tidiness" in talking to boys in a class, but I never knew boys of nine or ten who did not show a spontaneous and increasing desire to keep things in their proper places. Equally, I have never heard of a body of boys who, collectively, got fonder of putting things away when they depended on a master for the order to do so. I doubt if there is any reasonably accessible virtue which does not

tend to come of itself in a self-governing community of boys.

There is another justification for free discipline which, in my estimation, makes of small account by contrast all other reasons one might advance. At the very dawn of civilization man was implicitly offered a great choice. Nature said to him : " You can educe the original and the creative which is in everyone ; you can train the imitative which is in everyone. If you train the imitative, you will easily get a sort of safe dead-level of merit, both in mind and in conduct—and you will indirectly give the man who can imitate the headship over your race. If you evoke the creative, your work will be more difficult because the way of creation is to seek out new and unexpected paths. You will then make a friend of the rebel, who rebels most of all from the imitative, the routine-made, the prescribed—but you will have lost the allegiance of some few of those who cannot come in first along the path of the creative." The choice was made—has never been departed from ; the imitative has always won its way upwards to the steps of the throne ; while creation, crushed in the wheels of system, has mostly had to face disillusionment, and suffering and sometimes the penalties of its crime.

Riis, in *How the Other Half Lives*, gives remarkable instances of the ways of boy-thieves' gangs on the east side of New York. Their concentration on their work, their ingenuity and inventiveness, their keen study of the mechanical subjects subsidiary to the art of house-breaking, appear to be remarkable. On the moral side, the boy of this sort appears to see a real heroism in " getting pinched," as it is called, and lives

up to the one idea of heroism with which he has ever come in contact. It is easy to see how, whatever they may be now, these boys were once too good for the sort of education which they were offered. Talk with Mr. Homer Lane, or with Mr. Thomas Mott Osborne, who is doing such wonderful work among the criminals of New York State, and you will hardly be shocked even by the judgment of that chaplain of Wormwood Scrubbs who found more moral idealism among criminals than in the world outside. Crush the soul of the creative into the moulds designed for the simian and the slavish, and do not be surprised if the process ends even in the moulding of a rogue.

In both normal and abnormal human beings—in man as in child—many of us are coming to see the untold harm wrought by direct and frontal attacks upon the evil-doer. The famous defective child of Aveyron, who was finally educated almost into normality by the Frenchman, Itard, broke everything within his reach until Itard, by dint of providing him with more and more beautiful vessels to drink from, had overcome his destructive tendency. An illustration of the same phenomenon in the adult: a man, shaken by the fate of a friend who had killed himself by jumping through a window, would probably have done likewise but for the clever encouragement of the mental specialist whom he consulted. The doctor threw the window open wide, and invited his patient to jump out. The obsession disappeared instantly. A certain experimenter confirmed the principle underlying Itard's victory by urging a boy of criminally destructive tendencies to break everything within reach. The boy broke the vase which was offered him, but the insistent challenge to smash the master's

watch effected a cure. The boy turned white, trembled from head to foot, and said he *could not*. A small boy suggested to me the other day that it doesn't do to say "Don't" even to yourself. We were discussing why a comical idea seemed more comical in church than elsewhere. "I think it's because, when you want to laugh, you begin saying 'Don't' to yourself," was his solution.

May I now give a few plain and unpretentious hints based on four years' experimenting with self-governing classes? In the first place, whatever a child does I begin by assuming that from his point of view he is acting quite rightly. This attitude need never convey an implicit falsehood if one forms once and for all the mental habit of never being sure why a boy carries out a particular act. And this form of agnosticism is, after all, far more likely to be in keeping with the spirit of truth than any rash hypothesis as to motive or intention. Convinced that the act is harmful to the community, one still proceeds with the utmost caution. The commonest solution will be to say nothing and wait. But suppose the anti-social conduct continues long enough to threaten the interests of the others, and these others have not yet learned the art of themselves dealing properly with the situation? It is now time to walk softly and slowly to the boy, generally without saying a word. Then, watching him sympathetically, you can await developments. Most frequently, to use the language of the newspapers, the incident now closes. But suppose it does not? Very likely I should then remind the offender that he is free to do what he is doing if he wants to. As a last resort we can get him, without showing more than a friendly curiosity, to tell us exactly



why he likes doing that particular thing. After listening with unfeigned interest to the boy's own reading of his action, we have now an unfailing remedy. We can propose this particular line of conduct on the boy's behalf as a useful activity to be pursued with advantage by others.

In a really free class the voting will nearly always leave that one boy as the sole person whom the class wishes to behave in this way. And they wish him to do what he is doing, if he wants to do it himself, because they know that he does not yet realize his own freedom. I have never yet known a boy of preparatory school age who did not abandon an anti-social line of conduct on hearing the result of this vote. But, in justice to the claims of free discipline, I ought to add that I have been very seldom obliged to invoke the opinion of the whole class in this way. And I have known boys of from eight to nine years old work for ten weeks on end without a single disorderly or disturbing act, and boys of ten work quietly for four or five days in the absence of any grown-up person. "Negative discipline is powerless," wrote Goethe. I would go so far as to say that a boy's hatred even of the "pi-jaw" is far more often due to the hatred of its negations, its strictures, and its discouragements, to the fact that it is humiliating and denigratory, than to its solemnity or even its pomposity. I do not defend the "pi-jaw" in any form—at any rate, the sort that cannot be put into two or three sentences of healthy encouragement; but I know that most children love hearing of a positive ideal, and hate the negative obverse of the same ideal with a curious fanaticism and a complete failure to believe that it really comes to the same thing. If, indeed, the good

writer is to be measured by the words he leaves in the inkpot, the good teacher is he who leaves most generalities—and especially critical and negative generalities—unspoken. Speaking to children is, of course, an art of choice—invoked each time in order to settle a special problem.

Suppose, for example, that in walking through a remote village, where it is considered rude not to say "Good morning" to every human being who crosses one's path, I say "Good morning" to a child of six, who replies with a defiant "What?" The old-fashioned disciplinarian would sour immediately, and perhaps deliver a brief lecture on the spot. But suppose I say pleasantly: "I only said 'good morning'—I like saying it"; or, again, "Don't you like saying 'good morning,'" or, "Mayn't I say 'good morning' to you?"—and if the child's whole demeanour does not change in the twinkling of an eye into friendly confidence—well, then, I fancy that child is mentally defective, or has been so ill-treated in his brief little existence that the adult is permanently his foe.

Children hate to wound you if you try to hide your wounds from them. Some of them seem to love to wound those who parade their wounds with resentment—and most of all if the resentment is expressed in those fixed forms of speech which delight them, because they feel that the tones and words come, as it were, in response to their own pressing of the button. Moreover, every child must subconsciously feel that life is a continual battle for self-preservation in every meaning of the word. Sometimes it is a mere vulgar trial of strength, as when you try to thwart his will. Sometimes, by a look or a word, you change the

contest to one of gentleness, or self-sacrifice, even of self-surrender. But here the contest is just as real, the sense of victory just as complete, if the child can outdo you in reconciliatory and friendly measures. To allege that the subject-matter of all strife in childhood is physical conquest, mechanical appropriation, and sensorial satisfaction is to allege what is not true even of young animals, let alone of young savages. The rehearsal for the functions of life is a rehearsal for many diversified functions of complete living—and the pride of life includes naturally a pride in every social art, in every kind of graceful and winning conduct which the mature type may be expected to exercise.

Quick seemed to be surprised that as a child "the hard life of the Spartans filled him with enthusiasm," and that he attempted "petty pieces of self-discipline in imitation of them." In no wise does it surprise me. The voluntary overcoming of difficulties is of the essence of a game—and the fact that the game suggested the game of life would add to the charm. Some day we shall be convinced that even the pursuit of ideals is a game to the young child, and that, if he were allowed to play it, his conduct would have some of the inspiration of moral genius instead of that of herd convenience.

The greatest difficulty about dealing adequately with the question of discipline is that discipline is only one side of a complex school life, and that a healthy reform of disciplinary methods can only come with a wide reform of general school administration. Personally, I believe that formal curricula will soon have to be replaced not only by a system involving more scope for individual choice of subjects, but infinitely more choice of method in the manner in which those subjects are pursued. The more advanced psychology of Dewey

and Stanley Hall, as well as the experience of many a capable and open-minded empiricist, has clearly shown that the child, and not the textbook, is the proper synthesizer, and that the formal, prearranged synthesis is so much against the nature of the child that it will have to be abandoned in favour of inductive methods based on experiment, and discovered largely by the child himself. I should be departing too far from my subject were I to embark on any suggestions as to how this result might possibly be attained, and my present purpose<sup>1</sup> is merely to indicate the hopelessness of seeking to introduce a free discipline so long as ethical freedom clashes with intellectual servitude—ethical spontaneity with “averaged” intellectual routine. Personally, I have not given the smallest punishment of any kind whatever for four years past, and I have assured each class as it has come to me, boldly and freely, of its perfect immunity from all penalties for wrongdoing. But I could not have done this if I had mapped out a narrow course of studies—so much for each hour, and the same for everyone. Our work had to be active, and on the plane of each boy’s development. Immediate “results” had to be sacrificed to what I took to be permanent gain.

I would compare the whole educational process—ethical and intellectual—to the shading of a picture. If the picture is to be true at the finish, you cannot lay down a law as to completing such and such a quarter of an inch of shading before you begin on another quarter of an inch. You cannot say, again, that all your vertical or diagonal or horizontal lines must be drawn in such and such an order. The mind

<sup>1</sup> That of this lecture of 1916.

of the artist must assimilate, must generalize, must particularize in its own way. Your Inspector may be horrified, for Inspectors are apt still to think that the examples of Arnold and Thring are worth all the educational science, all the laboratory experiment, in the world—just as Galen and Hippocrates were cited against the founders of modern medicine, and by none more than by those who had flourished on vigorous bleeding. And what are you to say to the worthy man who says to you, as a certain gentleman said to me: "Well, I was well beaten at school, and I am all the better for it." I could not say to him what I say in all confidence to you, that had I believed in this improvement of his personality by the birch, I should certainly have still less relished his society had he been denied its advantages.

During the past few years many experiments in child self-government have been carried out. The pity is that—owing to the inexplicable absence of an experimental and research department at the Board of Education—it is only possible to learn of them by spending, as I had to spend, some weeks in three or four of the largest libraries in London, including the British Museum. Otherwise one might well imagine that outside of the Montessori schools, the Little Commonwealth, and one or two schools in the United States, there was hardly any practice embodying the latest truths of child-psychology. Experimental schools are, indeed, absurdly few;<sup>1</sup> but they are not, fortunately, non-existent. There is a Council School in Yorkshire where there are no "Dont's," and where every sort of useful activity depends on the children's own initiative: where the children make their own

<sup>1</sup> They are not much more numerous four years later

coffee for their lunches, bind and mend their own books, make the chains with which they go out surveying, and where some extraordinary interesting inductive research—into Yorkshire dialects, for instance—is carried out. Here, we are told, “the psychological moment is never lost in order to save the honour of a time-table.” The Combe Hill Girls’ School, again, dispenses with all hired service, and makes its children completely responsible for the welfare of their school. An elementary school in Yorkshire maintains with success, both financial and moral, a co-operative poultry farm, which has had the effect of keeping boys beyond the usual leaving age. There are schools where punishments, rewards and marks have been abolished, and there is a relatively large number of schools which are feeling their way to emancipation through a better balancing of manual and of intellectual activities.

In all schemes of self-government there is apt to be a danger—to use a word of Dr. Stanley Hall’s—to “oversocialize” the boy, who may already be a herd-thinker and need emancipation from, and not increased subjection to, herd-thought. But this danger, it seems to me, is far greater under so much of self-government as is given under the prefect system than it would be under a more completely autonomous regime, deliberately inspired with the ideal of “Live and let live.” Inspiration by adults, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is likely to have more weight in a community really, and not only nominally or partially, facing its own difficulties. I have invariably found increased tolerance one of the first manifestations of the new freedom of an autonomous class. The chief danger to individualized

thinking, to creative action, in a real boy-community would come from the inspiration of a master holding adult herd-ideals of propriety in thought and conduct, and who used his boys' freedom to shackle their individuality.

I am not sure that more has not been done to secure a rapid advance in disciplinary method in a short time through scouting than through all else combined—by scouting at its best, of course, as carried out with the enlightened ideas of its founder. For there are traditionalist snakes in the grass even in scouting—those who, if they had their way, would use it to crush instead of to stimulate initiative. Sir Robert Baden-Powell writes: "Authorities have come along to improve the Scout law and, not recognizing the active side of it, have changed it to the reverse—a series of 'Dont's.' 'Don't,' of course," he goes on, "is the distinguishing feature and motto of the old-fashioned system of repression, and is a red rag to a boy. The main step to success is to develop, not to repress, the child's character, and at the same time, above all, not to nurse him. He wants to be doing things: therefore encourage him to do them in his own way. Let him make his own mistakes; it is by these that he learns experience." If these are not the words of a great educator, they certainly resemble them. As mere theory they would, of course, be almost platitudinous, but as an explanation of principles being applied in practice, I find them inspiring.

Some day I hope to publish the evidence I have accumulated to show that genius need never have been rare, that commonness is so nearly universal only because the whole stimulus of education is applied to the mechanical fructification of the commonplace,

which, like the creative, is present in everyone—its whole energies to retarding the spontaneous because the spontaneous is inimical to the spirit of the machine and of those who have been themselves machine-moulded.

I admit that the teacher who will break away from the older discipline must make a sacrifice. His apparent initial failures—as judged by the official mind—will be more glaring than the apparent initial failures of the routinist. His boys will often and for a time be more ignorant on the surface, because they are wedding facts to realities and not merely combining formulæ, because they are not learning truths by heart, but going to the heart of truth to learn. When they show moral strength or intellectual interest, they will be called prigs—for, strange as it always seems to me, there is allowed to be nothing priggish in the anti-intellectual or in the artificial avoidance of a moral issue. History is accounted “shop,” but the technicalities of cricket and football are nothing so dreadful, even when they bore in the same or a worse degree; and if history becomes a joy and a passion, it must be mentioned apologetically—or even a machine-made history master might feel constrained to change the subject to more sporting interests.

“Young orangs,” as Dr. Chalmers Mitchell reminds us in his *Childhood of Animals*, “are extraordinarily docile and very affectionate, and have been taught many strange tricks—to wear clothes, to sit at table for their food, and to eat and drink with spoons and cups.” So, also, is the young human being. With sufficient patience the most ordinary of men-children can be brought not only to wear clothes, but to wear



them with fine effect, to sit very nicely at table, and to use their spoons and cups to perfection. The trainer of human beings can go a little further, and a man-child of quick memory and sound ape-like traits is likely to win success at any exhibition (including those offered by the colleges of a University). He may rise to the Cabinet, and he may learn to do almost everything through imitation, except see the superior if neglected genius in those he has outdistanced.

Should we sacrifice the mainly imitative child to the interests of the mainly creative? Luckily this alternative does not arise. But if we are faced with the more real alternative—whether we should aim at encouraging the imitative or encouraging the creative as they arise in each individual—then, I think, we might decide, without hesitation, to give our best efforts to helping on the creative. As one reads biography after biography of men of genius—and teachers will gain much practical child-psychology from the study of such biographies—one sees how important were the sensory and intellectual experiments which their nature obliged these children of coming greatness to substitute for the barren routine of ordinary school life. Freedom, allowed or stolen, to watch Nature, to construct, to take to pieces, to meditate, to solve self-proposed problems, to write stories or poems, to be seemingly capricious or “fidgety”—with most men of genius this freedom was indispensable, while most of their formal studies, generally neglected, were not.

What is true of the man of genius is true of the genius that, in some form and degree, is part of everyone. We cranks, we rebels (if those are much longer to be our names) are often accused of presumption.

But, I ask, what is our presumption compared with that of those pedagogues who would substitute for Nature's mysterious workings, for her secret education of endless unconscious and half-conscious processes, her efforts to build on intuitions and on all sorts of strange relationships between physical and sensory and intellectual—who would substitute for this a cut-and-dried system of mechanical provisions, a pharmacopœa of universal recipes for mind, soul and body? It is the new teacher who is relatively modest in his aims.

We have much to face—not only fair fight, but every sort of jesuitry, every mere rhetorical trick that may appeal to those who dislike the disturbance of impending change. At one moment we are held to be likely to produce a type too ideal for a workaday world, at another a type that can only be below the standard of our civilization. The man who told us yesterday that our boys will know nothing, to-day tells us, with gravity and even impressiveness, that they will know too much, and be priggish about it. Whether this sort of criticism is dishonest or merely stupid I hardly know. What I do know is that all the criticism of the new discipline I have heard in the past four years has been so self-contradictory and so inconsistent that it reminds one of the prescriptions and prohibitions of those food reformers who, if their views are collated, will be found to have left us nothing to eat and not even water to drink. The difference is that in the present case it is the traditionalist critic, and not the reforming "faddist," who has sought to upset the axioms of ordinary reasoning.

We have, then, a long way to go. How can we best set out on the journey? I think we can do something by setting the newer psychology on its feet

—not the ridiculous psychology which rehashed tradition and called it science, but the real psychology which has at last been founded by Stanley Hall and his investigators, by Dewey, by Münsterberg and the vocational psychologists (who have provided finer tests of fitness for many callings than any that could be applied through the ordinary examination), by McDougall and the social psychologists (who, especially through the direct studies of Conway and Trotter, are showing us both the strength and weakness of the herding habit), by the newer criminologists (who will teach the teacher how easily he may turn a hero into a criminal), [by the psycho-analysts whose revelations promise to be more widely significant than all the rest put together], and by a growing band of other workers who are showing in a thousand ways that the human mind is far more the business of Nature than had ever been suspected—that the natural mind is uncannily clever in directing its own operations, and some clever men uncannily stupid in thinking they know Nature's business better than she knows it herself.

Then, as scientific psychology develops, and many a paradox has become a commonplace known even in Whitehall—dogmatism in teaching will be as rare in a good school as pupil self-government is to-day. Formal curricula will give way to liberally alternative studies ; examinations will be individual and not collective, and become essentially tests of intellectual appreciation rather than of power to memorize. The truth that the young of man, like the young of all animals, only work hard in the spirit of play will no longer be merely accepted reluctantly as an incontrovertible abstraction, but applied in all teaching as a practical

fact—as, indeed, the one fact which no one can afford to neglect. Nobody will then dream that the efficiency of a school can be judged from moment to moment or at any set occupation—but that its true measure is the power of initiative, the mental and bodily health, the constant activity and the intelligent curiosity of its children, on the one hand, and, on the other, the silent, watchful, scientific interest, the calm and confident faith of its grown-up helpers. The school will be the children's school, with no rules that are not of the children's making ; the school's problems will be solved by them : the school's happiness and the school's sorrows will be their affair rather even than ours—ours only in so far as we are fellow-citizens with them. I believe that such a school might not always pass a cut-and-dried test of efficiency, but I believe that a visitor of large vision and insight would soon find tests, the application of which would leave him not only satisfied, but rejoicing over the growth of its children. And what I am most certain of is that those children would go forth into life with a new mission, a new inspiration, and a new message of hope for the generations to come.

Somebody has already said (I think with truth), that wars are made in the nursery and the schoolroom rather than at Court or in the Council Chamber. The teacher is thus, in a very vital sense, above all monarchs, hastening or retarding the march of the nations, confirming violence by his own violence, inspiring the pity or the wrath of the peoples, making the truth seem false or true according to his own bias, and doing great good or untold ill while remaining true to his own ideals of right and justice. More than conscience, then, is needed—a theory of life founded

on immutable laws. And have we not now discovered this one immutable law—that the soul of a child cannot be cast in chance moulds, in any mould of adult design, without gravely imperilling the development of its nobler faculties? If the teacher would be great, let him learn that he is greatest of all when he allows himself to be led by the children.

## CHAPTER II

### REALIZATION

#### (I) *Exit Class Teaching : Arithmetic*

IN the three schools of his work the author has dealt with children from over their fathers' shops, children from castles and children from cottages and mean town dwellings. That offered pleasant variety, but it causes a difficulty. While he himself is neither a secondary schoolmaster nor an elementary school teacher, or is both and more, he recognizes that most of his readers are principally interested in either elementary or secondary education. And there is a difference between the sorts of child—sometimes in favour of the rich man's boy, sometimes in favour of the poor man's. There is a difference in the *timbre* of the response, though not in the degree of its warmth nor in any part of its essential nature. The greatest difference is between the poorest children and the other two classes. Very poor children are more strongly individualistic, less co-operative at the outset than the very rich and the fairly well-off. Generally the context will show which sort of child is being aimed at.

A word of explanation of the following description of actual work on individualized lines. While appearing in a quasi-fictional dress, they are absolutely true to the facts and the spirit of the history of these methods in the past eight years. This particular instrument

of communication is employed for several reasons. In the first place a matter-of-fact exposition of the apparatus and material at sufficient length to be useful would be dull beyond yawning at. Then there is a sense, as Guy de Maupassant showed, in which fiction is truer than the photographic interpretation of incidents and of persons. It is only after long work on these new lines that one has a reasonably adequate sense of the significance of the trivial and of the part it plays in introducing or cementing the essential. In writing it can only be conveyed, still imperfectly, by producing an atmosphere unattainable in the form of a logical sequence of ideas.

In all these descriptions the reader would do well, whenever he can bring himself to do so, to identify himself with the X who is in charge of the class or group. He is a sort of quintessential embodiment of the class adviser, and this attitude, while also an excellent training in sympathetic adaptation, is greatly preferable as regards the unfolding of the essentials of those methods to the mere assumption that X stands invariably for the author.

X is standing in an inconspicuous position, feeling kindly towards his first small fellow-travellers along a new road, when they come into the room, rather timidly because X is, in two senses, an unknown quantity. He shakes hands with each, because it "isn't done." He recognizes Jones minor, and Jones minor sets to work to size him up. Jones minor has a glint of the mischievous but friendly little devil in his bright eyes. "You're a boy who's going to help things on." "Yes, sir?" "Of course. You know you are, don't you?" "Yes, sir." Jones minor is the boy with

a capacity to get free quickly. He is frank and friendly and not shocked by new aspects of things. The Head would say that he might be either "pulling X's leg," or else be capriciously accepting a part which he could not sustain. X knows better. This is what Jones minor has been looking for, and in a few weeks his full vitality will be given up to his new work. In other classes he rags when he can, and day-dreams when he can't.

The Head is an open-minded man, and he has already told the boys, though rather inadequately, about X's faith in certain new ways of doing things. All boys like new things, but with Jones minor it is a case of anything to escape from the old. Quick intuition, in which he is strong, has told him that he is going to breathe a fresher air and be happier for an hour or two a day. The boy who rags and day-dreams by turns is happy in no deep sense.

X stands silently until all are ready, and then he says something like this: "Well, here we are. We're going to try to prove something together. I have been arguing for some time that work and play are really the same thing, and I want to know what you think about that—not now, but when you have been working here for a few weeks."

Nobody looks very shocked, everybody seems interested, and the eyes of Jones minor sparkle unmistakably. X's practised glance has singled out a look of readiness on two or three other faces.

"I promise never to punish, no matter what you do, and that means that neither will I get you punishments. So, if anyone would like——" (He is going to propose some impossible outrage upon his own dignity, when he remembers that that sort of thing must be reserved



as the emancipatory shock to cure the actual beginning of some disorder. But he is pleased to have put in the unfinished sentence.)

"You can walk freely about to get things, and if you have to leave the room, just come and tell me you are going—you needn't ask."

"Now about our work. We're all going to be partners, all playing games together and everybody helping everybody else. Some of us will work in twos, some alone—just as you find best. I shall simply come round and look on, and be ready to help you when you want me. And if I tell you of a mistake, remember that mistakes are the most useful things in the world."

Jones minor has slipped away already, and is pushing to and fro the slide of a cardboard calculator, of which there are many—simple little adding and subtracting machines for ordinary numbers, money and fractions—so that the boys can question one another and be sure of their answer. (They are easily made by placing the figures at fixed intervals on a wide card, and having vertical slides of proportionate widths bearing the plus and minus figures. When carefully made they read straight through as e.g.  $100-18=82$ ).

X explains to Jones, after his exclamation of "Bags I!" that the thing is not much good to work at by yourself, and that if he wants to work by himself there are this, that and the other games which he will find better. Jones calls upon a critical, conventional-looking boy to work with him. (X has heard of this boy Rogers, from the Head, who quotes him for his exemplary conduct.) Rogers pulls himself together, but X puts his money on Jones first as the boy who will concentrate.

## EXIT CLASS TEACHING : ARITHMETIC 83

All swarm round like bees to investigate the games for the study of number, quantity and space. X sees that Brown neglects the jolly-looking coloured devices in favour of the blackboard pieces—lengths of wood cut fractionally from whole to twelfths (which last are cut diagonally owing to the otherwise narrowness of this smallest piece) and blackened to take, in chalk, the self-proposed problems of the boys. The longest piece has a length of 18 inches, and all are cut from four-inch boards.

Taylor minor and Redpath are working, without knowing the heavy name which can alone convey its principle, at the Reciprocal Game, in which every question is your partner's answer. The following will do to represent a corner cut off each card :—

A

$\frac{1}{2}$ of	Double
25	$11\frac{1}{2}$
30	75
35	125

B

Double	$\frac{1}{2}$ of
$12\frac{1}{2}$	23
15	150
$17\frac{1}{2}$	250

There are numbers of these cards, each containing about 48 question-answers in the squares.

Wilkins mus. has flitted from one thing to another in search of the absolutely best for him, but is now watching Brown, who has tumbled to the idea of the blackboard pieces and has tentatively put 2 on his sixteenths. X gives the two their first idea of fractions, and they see in a moment that  $\frac{4}{8}$  and  $\frac{8}{16}$  are the same as half. Wilkins mus. goes off with his own share of blackboard pieces, and a little later, when X steals

up to him, he calls out: "Don't look yet, sir; I haven't finished." (Children hate to show the unfinished job; they take pride in the completed product of their work. But also, X fancies their love of mystification may count for more in the matter.)

Anson is putting together the fractions of  $\frac{1}{2}$ , represented in cardboard lengths, and Benger is fitting coloured slips into spaces of the same colour marked x on the cards of simple problems, such as:

(green)

$\frac{1}{2}$  of 12 is

(green)

(green)

6 times	x	is 48
---------	---	-------

8 (green)

leading to more difficult questions, and serving as an introduction to Algebra.

Others are playing at "From Known to Unknown," in which you take a cardboard slip of any length and colour you like, and try to find the value of the piece. If you are not certain of the value, you go on to another piece of the same length and colour. For instance, if you are not sure that one-twelfth of 600 is 50, or if you haven't the least idea of what it is you go on matching it with other pieces till you come finally to a piece giving an answer about which there is no possibility of mistake, such as  $25 \times 2$ . Each value has some ten ways of stating it, and one at least is within the reach of anyone who can read, usually a multiple of 1.

X has several bees in his bonnet on this subject of Number. He makes addition as attractive as he possibly can, and the longer boys stick to adding figures, the better he is pleased. The simplest adding is not

## EXIT CLASS TEACHING : ARITHMETIC 85

done with, he considers, until the mind can work unconsciously from 13 and 8 to 21. If 9 and 8 don't automatically give 17 in boyhood, when automatism, both for good and ill, is so easy to secure, they will always be a nuisance and a danger. He doesn't, of course, want to see boys held up by this from the more intrinsically fascinating problems of mathematics, but, by making attractive devices for adding, to be used at intervals between bouts with more advanced material, he gets boys to go on doing simple additions long after they would have completely dropped them in the ordinary class. If it is urged that all the other processes involve addition, X replies that he does not think that this comes to the same thing. The concentration is too much dispersed owing to other difficulties.

He introduces boys to fractions at the earliest possible moment, and cannot understand why schoolmasters prefer to bring in division first—unless it is that they have no apparatus to make fractions the easy and self-explanatory things they are when concrete explanation is at hand.

Lastly, he has a belief that the perception of equivalent values, exercised in his game "From Known to Unknown," is a royal road to doing eventually prodigious sums in the head, if one wanted to. Bobby helped him to see this in the masterless school of which Bobby was the eldest. Bobby worked for many days in his number time from a mere hint that by doubling one side of a multiplication and halving another, or by treating the two sides in any mutually inverse way, one got the same value.

Since these times, in fact in the past few weeks, X has invented other devices. One is a blackboard adding and subtracting machine, made simply and

strongly, with both subdivided bed and sliding pieces of blackboard surface. X had long felt the need for this. He had found that the boys liked to use his machines for considerable periods, but that they did not stick to machines of their own manufacture. The blackboard adder and subtractor has the obvious advantage of allowing unlimited range and variety, and as soon as a boy has had enough of one sort of problem he can proceed at once to others. The bed is subdivided with lines of red, between which there is ample room for writing the figures in chalk. The two sliding blocks, each as wide as one section of the bed, are fixed to thick tin pieces bent over the two sides of the board. The two blocks can be used separately having, e.g., " $+6\frac{1}{2}$ " chalked on each, or together as " $+9\frac{3}{4}$ ."

X is also now doing much with scales and weights. A given number is given an artificial weight value, and the scales are adapted to show the word "Right" in the middle of their swing, and "Wrong" at each extreme. Colours can be introduced to enable the use of different values on the same piece. Thus "10" in white may be "30" in red, "50" in green, etc. This gets over the relatively small range of scales, for the delicate sort must not be weighed down heavily, and clumsy scales need a large unit. A range of 50 units is enough.

X's weighted pill-boxes are attractive-looking things in their many colours, and the principle is surely sound. So far as its application has gone yet, it promises great success. It is delicate and accurate, strictly auto-corrective, and wonderfully flexible in its adaptability to varied problems. It can be so adapted and applied that it can say "right" or "wrong" to any answer of any problem, and that not only in Arithmetic.

Jones minor has made himself a little book about the number seven. It is full simply of equivalents. It began as a consequence of his going on halving a number till he had to write denominators clean across his little blackboard. "How long could you go on for?" X asked him. "Oh, a long time, I suppose," he replied as he squeezed in the last figures his blackboard would take. "Well, try to give me an idea." "You could make figures as long as the table." "Any longer?" "I don't see why not." "Across England?" "I don't see why you need stop. Would they reach round the world, sir?" "Why not?" "I don't see why they need *ever* stop. Sir, would they really go on for ever?" "Yes, for ever." "Isn't it wonderful?" he said softly. And Jones minor thought like an inspired creature, to judge by his face, for a few moments, and then rubbed his blackboard clean. Then gradually he got from that to see that all numbers had an infinite number of equivalents, including the number seven of his little book.

Rogers was beginning to be a thorn in X's flesh. He was superficially so confoundedly respectable, and deep down so lacking in initiative. He would have been a wet blanket for everyone, but for the counter-stimulus of Jones minor, whose fires burned strong. Rogers, the immaculate, tried even to get other boys to rag. He did not react, like the other boys, to the gentle shock of a kindly word spoken at a moment when a child expects at the least abuse. At last X got hold of him on the cricket field, and sat down and talked with him. X always avoids "jawing" as he would avoid a plague. His conversations are long silences. That, apart from any privacy in the

matter, makes the talk *à deux* a sheer necessity to get where he wants to. At last X got that abominable revelation—the expected. Rogers wanted to be told what to do, and he wanted to be given “more sums.” X told him that he couldn’t tell him what to do, because no human being could possibly know what was the best thing for another at a given moment, but he would try to help him a little more until he found his feet.

At first X was inclined to be adamant on the question of providing Rogers with sums, instead of his providing himself with them like the other boys. And then he realized that if nothing were done in the matter Rogers would really have a sort of right to excuse his own laziness on the ground that there was no provision for his particular case. So little cards were made, each with a sum on the front and an answer on the back. And then Rogers worked dutifully, but never in the spirit of the other boys, until a storm cleared the air. X never plans storms, but he thanks Heaven for the best of them. Rogers had exclaimed, whiningly, “I don’t know what to do,” and boy after boy had made a friendly suggestion. “I don’t see that you can teach yourself. I think it’s all rot.” At this Jones minor blazed. “Look here, Rogers, we’ve had enough of you. You’re always a nuisance. And now you’re rude to Mr. X. You’d better clear out if you can’t be decent.”

X went up to Rogers and spoke gently to him—what words he cannot remember, but they were words of apology from himself, as well as of forgiveness of anything the boy had said. Then came the dawn. Rogers suddenly melted, and in a moment was sobbing dreadfully. That was the cure, one of those changes worked through the strange power of tears; and Rogers

not only gave the class no more trouble, but really came to see the inner meaning of its play.

(2) *Languages and Literature*

X has been ill for four days, and at his request the boys have gone on working by themselves. The Head came up to see him on the eve of his return to work. "Prepare yourself for the worst," he said—and then added, seeing the deplorable look of worry on X's face: "No, they've been wonderful. I've looked in myself from time to time, and they were all working away busily."

A few days afterwards the Head apologetically asked X if he could see his way to taking English Grammar and also the learning of poetry. The Head was always most considerate and also loyal in spirit as well as letter to the promise to give X perfect freedom of action. X said he would see what he could do, but, while he thought he could do something with grammar, he was more doubtful about the learning of poetry—for why should boys be obliged to learn the same poem at the same moment and often a poem which makes no direct appeal to them?

That night the solution came to him in bed. Win the Head over to the idea of their choosing their own pieces, and—turn the thing into an entertainment. This succeeded well. The boys had their own Chairman, who called on the various performers, and asked for criticisms at the close of each item. X only expressed his opinion when he felt either that the recitation had been underrated, or that some really important weakness had been overlooked. Gradually the boys introduced gesture and acting, were more and



more daring in their choice of pieces and the interpretation of them, and what threatened to be a brake on free progress became quite an important item in the freeing of their spirit. Boys would come to X on the evening before breaking-up and ask him to request the Head to get in another "entertainment." A visitor, prominent in the Scout movement, remarked to X: "The boys don't seem to be reciting. They seem to be telling one something."

Grammar, in so far as it is reducible to rules, is a matter of machinery. In so far as it is not a matter of rules it is a matter of ploughmen's mistakes in the past, become stereotyped and correct. X says that on grounds of sincerity we should always admit the existence of the machine when we recognize it at work. So at first he made machines with sliding columns, each containing a clause to answer to the syntactic mechanism. The boys were delighted to find that by the laws of chance association, the sentences they made were usually more or less grotesque nonsense, although grammatically correct. From that the class got to sitting about with little blackboards on their knees, each responsible for a clause. Finally, they split up into two halves and acted the sentence decided upon with as many scenes as there were clauses. Then the spectator half of the class set to work to guess each clause. This had the advantage of often giving a dozen clauses of the right sort (the wrong sort counting as a point off the guessing side) before the right one had been guessed.

The parts of speech X treated in a somewhat similar way, but got his boys to see that every word, or very nearly every word told you what part of speech it was at least in the rough from its position in the

sentence. Thus, if I say "I went x the town," x must be a preposition ; if I say "The x dog is dead," x must be an adjective, etc.

Then he used to have games in which the boys would try to dispense with each part of speech in turn, so that they might realize that the pronoun was for example merely a saver of endless repetition.

The greatest criticism X has against English grammar is that it obscures the far more important matter of the use of words in the way of general classification. In brief the study of the meaning of nouns is humanly vital, and is neglected : the study of clauses and parts of speech could be postponed without loss until we have learned its essentials by natural inference. Besides, grammar, as he says, is mechanical : meanings are human and ultimate.

If X has one fixed idea more than another it is expressed in his boundless admiration for children's original writings. He has no patience with people who cannot see that such and such an expression used by a child could not possibly have been even unconsciously stolen from the writings or sayings of the grown-up. To him children's imaginative writings are altogether apart from anything else. Usually there is a peculiar directness in the use of language, and words are much nearer to things than with us. If we hear the word "house" we do not generally see a particular house because the impression has been blurred by repeated overlayings of fresh impressions of all sorts of houses of every shape, size and colour. We have intellectualized the word, and lost the telling, if limited, force of a primitive idea. The child sees a picture at once.

Miller's novel was begun a year ago : from a letter

X learns that it is still developing at the boy's public school. It was a story of merry comedy, full of quaint people and strange situations. White's was also mostly a burlesque, but the psychological predominated. He was, for a boy of 12, curiously interested in the play of human character.

The Head, to X's surprise and delight, suddenly suggested that at a school examination the boys should be allowed to write a poem as one of the alternatives in the English composition paper. One in twenty of the poems were extraordinarily good—and one written by a boy who wrote in blank verse for the first time, was Shakespeare of the later date in the matter of the varied *cæsura* and the weak endings of his lines. The treatment of the subject was also full of beauty. The father came up to X. "What's the matter with my boy? I can't help seeing genius in that poem. Ought I to be frightened?" X explained the frequent incidence of literary genius on the threshold of adolescence, and the father departed looking comforted. X tried to believe that the expressions of his fear were jocular.

The formal essay, he thinks, is an absurdity in early boyhood. The poem, the description, the story, the novel, and the play are infinitely superior, and there can be no possible excuse in such a purely creative field of work for not leaving the boy free to write what he wishes to. If he ever writes an essay it will be through sheer imitation. X says he has seen hundreds of children's compositions having real originality, but that he would not include among them any considerable part of even one essay.

One day X was in a park belonging to the school when the Head asked him to come and look at a

lovely natural theatre he had discovered. "Could you get your boys to write a pastoral play, and act it here?" X said he would if it was understood to be their uncorrected work. When produced this play was a thing of daintiness and light. The rehearsing had been done by the boys themselves, one of them (a young musical genius by good fortune) had composed and now played incidental music and the grown-ups went away with more respect for the creative powers of children.

There followed at an interval of some months, a more sombre work, played indoors with marvellous lighting effects of the boys' invention and execution, and with extraordinary reverence for a very beautiful theme. The dignity and repose of the actors, the utter absence of all tendency to hurry or to halt, the perfect stage management, says X, would never have been attained had he or any other grown-up person had a hand in things. X was for five years a dramatic critic, and has seen many plays, but this production will rest ever in his memory as a really beautiful work of co-operative creation.

Just before this play was produced a lady in charge of a school telephoned to X to ask him how he grouped his boys so wonderfully. She had never got *her* boys to stand where she wanted them to, and, as she was producing another play, she would like his advice. It had never occurred to her that children might be cleverer at grouping than most grown-ups—that is to say, of course, if the grown-up leaves the children in other respects with a feeling of creative responsibility.

X believes that missing word games have far more than their superficial value in teaching the fluent and accurate use of words. That is important, but

he sees in it something more still. A weakness in most men's minds is the failure to perceive the logical inevitable. The man who is "moderate" in his views of nearly all questions is quite as likely to be so through the lack of as through the strength of his logic. Not to go to extremes in one's views is sometimes more illogical than to out-Herod Herod. It is moderate to say that "night sometimes follows day"; but it is, while a truth, an absurdity, which the scientific mind ought to condemn as readily as the statement that "all short-sighted men wear spectacles." Anyhow, X likes these exercises in inevitability, which, even with easier examples than those published to his plan by Messrs. Bell, seem difficult to children under eleven, until they have got the trick of tracking the logically essential word in a given sentence. To boys over twelve they are generally a delight—as indeed they have sometimes been to partnerships of two grown-ups who have picked up the books and tested one another for a round half-hour.

These missing word books are published in two complementary small volumes on the plan of each questioner having different material in front of him. Here are two sentences in the Green volume of "English through the Missing Word": "In face of such an appeal he could no longer (withhold) his consent." "We hope soon to be in (possession) of the true facts of the case." Examples are also given of the same principle applied to general knowledge, e.g., brass consists of (copper and zinc). X now says that there would be no need to teach general knowledge if schools were not so "subject" mad, and now that he is a free man he shall not provide specially what comes at a furious pace in the ordinary course of events

when the children do the questioning and use books and card indexes freely. But of that a little later.

Here is X's latest method for teaching English vocabulary. Bobby, Georgie, Henry and company went through and through the first twelve lessons with rapt concentration and great profit to their powers of expression. Like the books of French conversation it depended for its self-explanatory principle on stage directions in the left-hand margin of the page, but, unlike the French books it was accompanied by a box containing articles and substances to be used in illustration of the languages of the senses, of the physical properties of matter, etc. This is an extract from the manuscript of a lesson (as usual each partner has before him different matter) :—

DIRECTIONS.	QUESTIONING PARTNER.	ANSWER TO BE AS NEARLY AS POSSIBLE.
Crease, etc., paper to show flexibility.	What do I prove by creasing, fold- ing or crumpling paper?	You prove that it is <i>flexible</i> .
	I prove its flex- ibility?	Yes, you prove its <i>flexibility</i> .
	Try to fold, crease, or crumple the table.	I cannot.
	Why not?	Because it is <i>rigid</i> .
	You have proved its rigidity?	Yes, I have prove its <i>rigidity</i> .
	Is stone rigid or flexible?	Rigid.
	Flowers?	Flexible.

X even introduced photographs of the children themselves to illustrate such words as "acquaintance," "recognize," and the like. He has great faith in this

device of marginal directions, which, it seems to him, could be carried very far. For example, a puppet show could be used for the teaching of languages. He has a considerable amount of toy stage scenery with persons, etc., which is numbered and referred to in the marginal directions of certain lessons in French.

Coming to language learning, one of X's devices for initiation into the first beginnings is a game of hide-and-seek in which the boys look away while an article is hidden. When the hider is ready, he says, clearly and slowly, and repeating the words until the thing is found: *Le crayon (e.g.) est sous le panier*. Then he hides toy animals, models of mountains, rivers, etc., and begins to introduce slightly more complicated sentences about their hiding-places. The great thing with all entirely new studies is to link up the beginnings of them with other mind content through pleasant associations.

For two or three years in one of his schools X used a French card index dictionary of his own construction, containing some thousands of pictures. (This was the precursor of the card encyclopædia to be dealt with later on.) It was a big undertaking, but taught words wonderfully. The novelty of it was that it didn't merely show you pictures of nouns, but of prepositions and any other part of speech. You can illustrate the principles of indirect speech by adding to the mouths of the persons in a comic picture smoky emanations containing the directly quoted remarks, and putting in the margin what the people are saying in indirect speech. The verbs were both "pictured," as they say at the doors of the cinema theatre, and given in full, and more even than that, every stage of development was provided for by giving illustrated information

under different tenses and persons of the irregular verbs. Thus the boys got something of those visual associations that one gets by living in France, with the further value that the associations were chosen and not accidental. X bought his own printing-press and printed skeleton cards of verb-endings, etc., which were filled in by hand according to the needs of the particular entries. This printing-press also helped in the making of French as well as other sentence-building machines.

A critic once wrote of a sentence in the partnership books published by Messrs. Bell, a sentence which had deliberately been made preposterous, that it "would bore boys stiff" to have to say anything so nonsensical. The critic made two mistakes. In the first place (this side of the matter would appeal more to him, because the context showed that he would have little real sympathy with a boy who was bored) the preposterous is by far the best introduction to the negative. As X says, the boy must feel that he simply must deny the truth of a charge which involves "pulling his leg," that is, he must find the necessary negative. And strong volition helps him to get over the mechanical difficulties of his negative sentence. As to the other point, X never printed a dialogue without having first tested it in actual use by his boys. And it so happened that the particular sentences quoted by the critic were a delight to them both before and after he delivered his strictures.

X always says that English schoolmasters and their friends set the young boy too old, and the older boy too young. A child under twelve who sees no fun in his work, will never have got to the inside of things, because fun is the play of his deeper nature, and



work that does not connect up with the deeper nature connects up falsely and dangerously. On the other hand to treat a young man of fifteen without the expectation from him of serious and considered opinions and without a change in tone corresponding to a respect no greater in degree, but differing totally in kind, is to wrong him just as greatly.

Fun is the essence of X's relations with all young children. It enables him to avoid friction at a thousand points. It saves sentimentality while still expressing love. It is a medium for the logical, a playful burlesque on the abnormal, and a criticism of the merely authoritative or customary. By showing the extreme, it suggests the intermediates—and all this while not burdening nor oppressing the child with a sense of *ex cathedra* pronouncements. It analyses and tests, gives courage and confidence, and tells truths to children that can be told in no other way.

X will not let me give examples. "Why?" I asked. "Because it is part of the deeper things of life. It needs initiation. The initiated will understand—the others never; they are too old, even at twenty. It is the lighter play of the spirit of freedom. Expressed in terms of religion it reads: "Take my burden upon you, for it is easy and light."

"In most schools a master can't be an educator, even if he wants to," said X. "He's treated like a bookkeeper, a policeman, an inquisitor, a record officer and a crammed examinee all in one. When he reaches all these ideals at once, he's the most horrible of human products known to me. Luckily the feat is seldom fully accomplished. But it accounts for the wretched salaries. The calling is set low by public opinion, and

the same daring brilliancy is not asked for or paid for as in operative surgery, in engineering, in business. By resistance to reform of method, teachers are injuring even their material prospects. And the bad material prospects keep out of the calling men who have lived and seen realities. So that there's often no room to show enterprise in, and few people who want the room."

"How ridiculous is the bookkeeping—I mean the mark-keeping," he went on. "I wonder if parents know that the thing is so confoundedly complicated, that a machine had to be invented and used to 'reduce' the marks. I have never been quite so dishonest over anything as over my shirking and dodging of this idiotic misuse of my time and injury to the growth of my boys. I sank lower and lower, and I averaged my guesses with theirs, and I have never repented to this day. No child, until he is taught to, cares a tenth so much whether he is cleverer than someone else as whether he is himself growing healthily and naturally in mind and body. The free class soon sets marks in their proper place, and it is only an odd devitalized boy or two who stand outside the enthusiastic wish of the others to abolish all competition. Mark-keeping is a trivial if unhappy example of the fact that the curse of civilization is the misplaced energy of the unfruitful."

Back in 1912 a boy told X his opinion that with freedom in schools there could be no more wars. "Why do you think that?" "I don't see how there could be. People would learn at school how to get on together. Now they are taught how to beat one another." "Ever heard anyone else say that?"

"No, sir." X adds wearily: "Now facts are telling me negatively that Eric was right. But he might have added the being beaten."

"By the way," he continues, "how mad everyone is for punishment. The call for it comes almost automatically. During the war some poor old blockheads of generals made the customary blunders, thinking, of course, what clever old things they were, and one of those papers which never go beyond mob thought, came out with huge headlines: 'THEY MUST BE PUNISHED!!!' Some people would punish a man for falling on his own nose."

"Punishment is the business of nature, and she does it mighty thoroughly. The boy who doesn't work is punished by boredom, a veritable inquisition torture of the whole being, and the general who makes a blunder is punished by ridicule and by not being told to take command another time. The unhealthy in mind or body, kleptomaniac or foul talker or consumptive, should be pitied, treated sympathetically, and, if necessary, segregated. It is only the devil in us that wants to punish, the worst part of our primitive unconscious, with its half-knowledge on the threshold of the conscious, that punishment is the great perpetuator of evil. I believe that when we punish, our worst selves unknown to us want to secure the continuance of the particular folly or sin. Tending to confirm this is the punishing master's often quite open admiration for the person he punishes, his daring, his 'boylikeness,' etc."

Anyhow, X doesn't punish, yet his boys are punished, and they see it clearly as they see any other fact of nature. The other day Bill punished himself. The matron had said that he mustn't bathe in the lake,

because he had a "temperature." Of this X knew nothing, though he was surprised to see Bill bathing. A denial that he had been told that he ought not to, was followed by the discovery of the lie, in such a way that Bill knew that X had found it out. All went on as usual, and Bill was well aware that X would say no more about the matter, but he felt that he owed some atonement to himself. He was missing from the Sunday dinner-table, and long search failed to find him till the middle of the afternoon, when X saw him lurking behind a tree. "Come on, Bill," X called softly. "Not yet," said Bill, with quiet determination. "Oh, I think so, Bill," and Bill ran up, and, being only eight years old, clung to him and wept half-happy tears.

X begs that you won't accuse him of teaching boys to punish themselves. He never mentions such a thing, for he has a painful recollection of the gentle wiliness in the face of a headmistress, who whispered: "John is in bed: *he has punished himself.*" He was about the fourth that term.

### (3) *Geography, History, Latin—with a Digression*

When X was leaving a school in which he had spent four happy years, he made a point of arranging a few minutes' chat with each of the nearly one hundred boys in the school. And he asked the advice of every boy what provisions he would like to suggest for the school for children of the back streets he was just going to start. The importance of a particular form of nonsense relationship, vaguely indicated in the words "The Zoo," was strongly urged, and with the suggestion that it had far more than a nonsense value,

by at least half a dozen. Many other suggestions were made, including a ten-year-old geographer's view that to begin with your own neighbourhood, while it might interest a few, was to keep you waiting to find out all about the world. X was glad to find a kindred spirit on this point, although he took care not to show his hand to his brother heretic. In point of fact X belongs in some measure to both schools, and he cannot see why the most general conceptions of the lie of the world cannot be allowed to develop side by side with placing the nearest post office in its proper relationship to the nearest public-house. You don't make a child feel any less big by trying to make him see (that's how it seems to him) old enough to find his way to the post office, but too young to find his way to Brazil. The only good you do is to suggest his mapping out his trip to Brazil from his atlas while you are talking about the different ways of getting to the post office. Regional geography is splendid, because there is in it something of the over-subject which we shall discuss later on. But the broadest subject yet devised must not encourage its apostles to sneer at mere topography. Topography is a wonderful peg on which the child can hang his own travels: a line of communications between the pictures he collects or looks at. So our map of the world has oftenest been out in the masterless school.

John has just been a long and difficult journey through arctic regions never faced by mortal man. X shivered with him, and he admitted he was up against long odds. He thought it would be warmer when he started. He finds in about 14 seconds the cards in the index (see next chapter) which show pictures of ice, of arctic exploration, etc. Bill starts off, without

making due provision for the journey, across the desert of Sahara, and we go back for our camels of which, with their Arab attendants, we have plenty of pictures.

X has made a number of cards with bits of maps upon them showing countries and towns and others with arrows pointing in different directions and asking "North or South?" "Hotter or colder?" etc. The answers are on the back, so that a boy can teach himself. Left to themselves children will go through and through these until the right answers come instantly. How splendidly "thorough" children can be when there is no croaking voice to say: "Be thorough."

Georgie is working at a little rough match-stick model of a main line railway, fitting in the names of the big stations, and seeing if he is right by comparing the numbers beside the rails with the numbers on the little coloured slips. And Henry is arranging concentric circles, which place countries within continents and towns within countries. The colours at the back tell him if the country is in the right continent, and he finds the name of the correct country on the back of the town circle.

Then there's a reciprocal geography game, on the same principle as the one for number,<sup>1</sup> interchanging capital with country, place with commodity, place to the east of x (which is y) with place to the west of y (which is x).

X agrees with those who find history the toughest nut for the teacher to crack. Here you have the tremendous disadvantage, he says, that true history, the history of peoples, the evolution of human society is difficult and, for young children, dull. The history

<sup>1</sup> See page 83.

of pageantry and battles by itself is thrilling to most, at any rate in a pleasant dress and with many pictures, but is misleading and dangerous. So up to now the masterless school has through direct study done little history outside the great unavoidable scenes, and the reading of a few biographies, and some acting. In the Index, dealt with in the next chapter, history is interwoven with places, and the centuries (as well as the kings) have each their pictured chronicle, their costumes, their furniture, their inventions (when any to mention) and their science. X works these in with his history ladder—a ladder with coloured rungs on which you hook your event cards by half centuries. This is not intended to give dates but to educate the subconscious in the lapse of time, both from then to now and between events. There is also a game with little slips which you place in measured spaces standing for the number of years since an event happened. Both this and the history ladder have the advantage of associating contemporary persons and events—an essential often forgotten, and not easily attainable without special provision. It is distressing to more than pedants to hear a boy who loves Shakespeare placing him in the eighteenth century. Our pictorial card index with its associations of costume and person and event does at least militate against that.

While X has so far not done much to bring history to the especial notice of the children as a separate subject it has come strongly into the reading of several, and all have woven many of the events of history into their wider interests. Keen readers of the *Children's Encyclopædia* and biographies and the "Piers Plowman" books, the making of their own indexes has also brought them up against principles

in their desire to describe and to classify historical pictures, but X claims no victory over a problem that still awaits a convincing solution—not the problem of giving children a thousand associational links with the past, but that of inducing them—if it is really desirable at this stage to induce them—to come to possess a knowledge of human or of national history as one changing but harmonious whole. He is inclined, he hopes from impartial motives, to hold that this sense of harmony and this knowledge of the detail of development will come in due course.

He is anxious that children should understand words before using them parrot-wise, and he has no sympathy for methods of teaching which allow of a child's quoting from treaties without having the least idea of the nature of the meaning of the word treaty. Understanding of such words should be secured inductively first—for instance, in the case of "treaty" the children might well together draw up a written agreement, and afterwards call it a treaty.

He holds that if children are to be taught to look back to the past of the race they should also be taught to exercise their imaginations on looking forward. If this were habitually done in all schools, it is quite possible that it would have a definite effect in producing a more open-minded and progressive type of human being. A child should realize, as far as possible by his own deductions from the material provided him that science is as yet only in its infancy, that abominable cruelties were practised only a couple of generations ago, that civilized living only covers a small fraction of man's evolution. All this could be presented to children of eleven and over. Then with this and a few



concrete facts to go upon let each work out his little prophecy, all being afterwards read out and discussed.

X once propounded a problem something like this to an English class who had voted a weekly discussion : " A party of fifty boys, including yourselves, is on Dartmoor when all human life on the earth except that of your party is destroyed, say, by poisonous gas from a comet. You fifty boys have to find out the extent of the disaster and you have to decide what steps to take to go on living, and how you are going to live." Now that discussion, postponed by the enthusiastic vote of the boys for three successive weeks, was, X still believes, the most educative thing he has ever hit upon. Not only for the boys either. It carried X with them into the very depths of first principles, and incidentally, since the boys had to find out how to handle the machinery of a wrecked civilization, it brought all up against fundamental principles in education, and produced ideas which he was able to use subsequently. These were boys of twelve and thirteen.

X believes in developing all sorts of little side dexterities that most orthodox people might consider trivial. First they are a part of general efficiency, secondly they are a pleasant change, and thirdly the time taken by them is so small that it is not really worth considering. Such are little measuring contrivances to educate the automatic processes of the brain in realizing instantly the interval between, say, Thursday and Monday week, between half-past ten and four o'clock, between November and July. There is another and far more important consideration. The child sees the immediate usefulness of such skill,

and the perception helps to convince him of the usefulness of much else.

X points out how few boys are convinced of the usefulness of Latin. This sense of uselessness, so X thinks, is a very grave disadvantage for Latin, and a misfortune to the boys who learn it. Latin is so often accepted merely as a thing that has to be learned because everybody else learns it, or again as a gateway arbitrarily placed by authority as an only entrance into your future school. The motive in either case is educationally corrupting to the boy, and X says that authority should either contrive to convince him on open and understandable grounds, or absolve him from it altogether. He believes that boys are reasonably, but seldom narrowly utilitarian. Nearly every boy sees the usefulness of the beautiful, for example, once the issue has been made clear to him, and X considers that, if Latin is essential to a boy's intellectual salvation, the fact is capable of proof to him while he is still uninfluenced by "prestige suggestion." To X it is an open question, on which he is far from prepared to take a stand—this question of classical teaching for masses of boys. While adoring the best of the classical heritage, and especially the contribution to it of ancient Greece, he remembers that ancient Greece had herself no such anterior cultural inheritance, and may possibly have developed all the more beautifully and completely (because confidently) on that account. There is something humbling and unsatisfactory about the view that a man should not be able to grow to complete human beauty and efficiency out of more immediate and yet vast resources without spending a very large portion of his childhood in trying to master little bits of a language and

literature of two thousand years ago. And yet he feels that while the faith of mere numbers of educated men who, like himself, have had to pass through this particular study may have been due to a species of fetichism, he perceives quite clearly that there are others who seem to be above the suspicion of accepting a doctrine merely on the ground of herd acceptance (for an educated herd may be just as herd-like in the run of its ideas as, though with more "rationalization" than, any other herd).

Reverting to the earlier point, X thinks that younger boys might make their way into Latin through one or more of the Latin languages, French and either Spanish or Italian. He believes that Latin would then be so comparatively easy of mastery that the loss of time would in the long run be made up. With the habit of natural concentration well developed, the boy would take to his Latin without anything like the effort and sometimes real resistance found at nine or ten. It would only then be a question of deciding on the advisability or otherwise, in regard to his particular and individual needs, of his taking up the subject. In this matter he should assuredly be allowed some voice, and the wider alternative provisions of more advanced education should guarantee that his failure to learn Latin would not be allowed to destroy his prospects.

As to methods, X can only adapt his experience with other studies to Latin, and refer to a case of such adaptation having successfully been made by another teacher. This last was the application of X's reciprocal method. Y, the master in question, cyclostyled sheets in two kinds, marked A and B, each conveying about one hundred words and simple sentences written

alternately in Latin and in English. The English was to be put into Latin and the Latin into English. (X had done the same for French). Example :—

## SHEET A.

- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. Head.    | 2. Flos.        |
| 3. My hand. | 4. Alter liber. |

## SHEET B.

- |               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. Caput.     | 2. Flower.         |
| 3. Mea manus. | 4. The other book. |

I have not Y's manuscript at hand, and I fear to go on from my imagination, but that was the principle on which it was worked. Y was delighted with the progress the boys made and with their excited concentration. The sympathetic reader will see what scope this sort of thing gives to that rapid attack on difficulties which is almost a definition of children's play.

X would have a picture card index for Latin on the same general principles as his French card index described above. A cut-out picture of a hand, e.g., would go under *manus*, and the fingers be marked "primus digitus," etc. Also under *manus* might come the vocabulary of lifting, washing, etc., while later on another picture of a lifted hand would be used under *levo*, etc.

As with French the merely mechanical in the linguistic sense should be interpreted and made familiar through interestingly mechanical things. Sentence building machines will help, and alternative colours in the same sliding column can be used to ensure correct concords.

X has been concentrating closely on this matter of Latin, while I have been writing. (He has not had to get up against it seriously before.) He now says reflectively: "Anyhow most of it could be made interesting. Despite old Cæsar's thundering long

sentences, there is much that could be done at the earlier stages to make the path pleasant to the overcoming of real difficulties. That's the whole problem, never to offer a boy anything he can't do without help. That is not, what it looks like superficially, making things easy: it is teaching a boy to do his own work. A boy who construes what is really beyond him, and is helped all the way through by his master and by having the difficulty passed on to a person who tells him what to say is not undergoing a healthy educational process. It is playing on that sense of inferiority which the psychologist knows to be so dangerous to sound development. And it is in another way and in a very bad sense making things easy, by leaving the boy with the sense that there will always be someone to help him through. Besides, if you perpetuate that way of doing things how are you going to avoid the man who shouts at his boys or sneers at them, or who withers them while doing neither. I don't say that all three sorts put together are any longer in an absolute majority, but samples of all are to be found on the staff of a large school. Take dear old Pitcher-Wetherington. He would disturb everyone within four classrooms' distance by his infuriated yells, and we all used to rag him about our own sufferings. But he pleaded that he couldn't help it. He loved boys, but he couldn't face their failure to master a difficulty of his imposing. Out of school he was another man: and in school, I believe, he would have been another man if he had not had to sit on a varnished throne and do what he really did not want to do, and make his little subjects work in his way instead of letting them work in their own. And I remember poor Fox. He was a sphinx-like man with boys (kindness itself

'beneath'), but he terrified them unknown to himself by talking to them from between closed teeth and imposing rules in indistinct tones that they were supposed perhaps to interpret by a process of substituting words for their vocalized skeletons. What do the educational papers mean when they try to tell us that there is no use in criticizing methods, that the change has been so great and that things are improving with lightning rapidity? I don't think they mean to do great harm, but I am quite sure they do. Such sayings can't appeal to the moderate, for the really moderate want a chance for everyone, with a victory for the best. They do appeal to the old 'beak' of the profession—the dull and pretentious and unreasoning upholder of tradition, who thinks that the late war was the first proof in his time that the world was not going to the devil through its crazy rebellion against the ideas of its grandfathers. He likes that paper. It gives a feeling of security. He is a reformer himself. He has worked out an absolutely perfect time table, and his curriculum has been arranged to a nicety. There is no more perfect clockwork in all England. His boys run on to the football field like soldiers at the double. He loves their narrowly precise use of their specialized slang, their exact adjustment of opinion to his own and that of their predecessors. He has 'got there' and that paper knows it. He purrs with contentment and goes in to Chapel with his notes for a sermon on submission to the will of authority.

"Even if I were myself satisfied with gradual reform, I would want a lively and extremely progressive attitude on the part of a headmaster and a school inspector. The school of a moderate man is pretty

safe to be on the side of reaction, for by the time his ideas have stood the interpretation of any likely staff, the element of progress in them will have been cut down till it is almost imperceptible. An enthusiastic reformer will also have his ideals whittled by the practice of those who cannot or will not apply them, but he starts with a wider margin for loss, and his school will be somewhere on the middle line between the traditional and the school of his ideals. As to inspectors, there is no standard degree of enlightenment expected at present, and the experimenter never knows to what century his inspector will belong. A high official whom I saw at the Board the other day pleaded guilty to me on this charge. At the least such men should be chosen on some new ground, and they should be trained for their work. Having taught successfully ten years ago is a very poor qualification—quite apart from the difficulty of deciding who has taught successfully. (The crammer's "successes" are alone capable of formal proof as regards mere "subjects".) A probationary inspector should be tested for knowledge of the latest developments of normal and abnormal psychology, including special study of fatigue, etc., and of current research and experiment, and he should be made to watch from within and for a lengthy period some fundamental work of experimental education, chosen from the schools of the whole world. An inspector who had, say, spent a year in Professor Dewey's school at Chicago might well be an inspiration to every teacher with the mind to understand."

Somehow the subject of Latin always sets X wandering on to the wider problems of general education.

(4) *The Over-Subject : Analytico-Synthesis*

"What a pity it is," said X, that when one has to name old ideas in an unusual way, one has to break one's jaws and frighten one's listener—to make understanding easy by first making it difficult! Mrs. Loder-Bangs looked at the Index to-day and said: "How nice! I think general knowledge is *so* useful," which, being interpreted in the light of her well-modulated voice and her subsequent remarks, meant "so useless." There's the trouble, and there's the tragic misuse we grown-ups have made of our own education. (It would have been bad enough even if we made the best of it.) We must refer everything to some old ready-to-hand label, and the label immediately classes things with other quite dissimilar things and exposes it to all our prepossessions. If Clutterbuck does not know an oak tree when he sees it he has to remark apologetically that he does not know much about horticulture or about botany. Even Mrs. Loder-Bangs would say that she was "ignorant of trees," for it is a thousand to one that she would not even associate it with her beloved or accursed "general knowledge." In point of fact the identity of an oak tree belongs humanly and ordinarily neither to botany nor to horticulture—it belongs to the art of knowing the common things about one, and giving them their proper name. That's a lighter way of saying that it belongs to the over-subject which is concerned with everything imaginable and reducible to analysis, classification and synthesis, that is with finding out what a thing is, putting it in its class (at this point, of course, you may have to invoke a special science) and the joining of it on to other things with which it will logically connect.



A tunnel, a barrel, a box and my mouth agree in the quality of being hollow, but there is little in common between these diverse objects except the attribute of hollowness. I suppose if I stop there I shall have to call my Over-Subject an Under-Subject in order to satisfy the frivolous, and I shall have to call it General Knowledge to satisfy Mrs. Loder-Bangs. But supposing my friend Professor Bongarçon of the University of Sceaux-Ceinture, chooses to write "Un traité sur le creux dans la Nature" (known briefly in England as "Bongarçon on Hollowness") the case becomes different. Bongarçon has discovered effects of hollowness never known to man before. His treatise has in it something of physics, something of geometry, something of physical geography, and even by his analogical extension of his ideas to the processes of the human mind something of the psychological. The physicists are only interested in twenty-seven out of forty-two of his crowded sections, and nobody else wants to claim him for his particular learned group. Bergson's "Laughter" similarly might have to await his attribution to a science of, shall we say "Ridism" or "Risism" or "Gelaism" or "Gelasmism," otherwise he must be left in his own particular corner of the Over-Subject—an isolated entity on the sea of analytico-synthesis—a sea of such dimensions as richly to deserve its name.

"Thank heaven the children haven't to bother with these abstract considerations," X continued, "but the fuller recognition of the implications they have for them cannot be exaggerated. We are so unfree of mind, so cramped with our parcelled ideas, that we don't realize the cravings of a child's nature for something more spacious and also something which will

eventually prove more fundamental than our own little bits of incoherent, and sometimes too coherent knowledge. How children love to compare a chimney with a wasp, showing first its differences and then its resemblances, and then to take two similar flowers and see first their resemblances and then their differences ! ”

Ernest, alias Ebenezer the Crocodile, and aged nine, has carried X with him into the depths by these childish exercises. “ By studying chimneys we might have been training ourselves to become builders,” he says, “ and wasps would have helped us with entomology—but we were training ourselves to be better builders and entomologists and more useful, because more analytic men.”

X loves classification. On the wall he has this list of words, which he thinks cover most of the needs of classing things in so far as they can be put in the wider classes of objects and substances :

Legible, malleable, brittle, geology, perishable, textile, square, hollow, hosiery, effaceable, oblong, ponderable, biology, rare, adhesive, familiar, annual, finite, fuel, portable, rigid, vendor, elastic, lubricate, circulate, pliable, ornithology, absorbent, oval, meteorology, numerous, object, divisible, metallic, vertebrate, architecture, insoluble, edifice, friable, thermal, mechanical, illuminant, liquid, cylindrical, zoology, explosive, conical, botany, canine, destructive, transparent, feline, gaseous, nocturnal, collapsible, solid, opaque, translucent, rectangular, geography, receptacle, inflammable, angular, porous, substance, colourless, instrument, spherical, visible, essential, tangible, resilient, common, pointed, irregular of shape, flexible, impermeable, tearable, artificial, indispensable, unique.

It will be noted that the order is deliberately haphazard and that the attributive relation is sometimes with nouns, sometimes with adjectives, and it might very well be extended to give other logical connexions with verbs. The boy runs down the list, arranged in parallel columns, with a stick, stopping at each applicable word. He sometimes qualifies it, if he wishes to, with the words "it may be (so-and-so)". "Book" Bobby would probably classify as follows: "Legible, may be square, may be oblong, ponderable, may be rare, may be familiar, finite, portable, generally rigid, (he should, but probably would not, say "slightly absorbent"), numerous, object, divisible, insoluble, solid, opaque, inflammable, visible (doubtful about "essential"), tangible, common, may be flexible, (doubtful about impermeable), tearable, artificial." A boy of eleven easily learns to run through the classification of any common thing with one or two mistakes in a few weeks of occasional going through the list. Younger boys (e.g., Bill at nine) take a great interest in it, and do much better than one would expect, even without the aids X introduces when necessary. He begins, after explaining a word, by asking for something liquid (which brings the ink), something adhesive (the paste arrives), something cylindrical (pencil) something rectangular, or oblong, or rigid, or flexible, or absorbent or circular. These boys from poor homes did not even at eleven know the names of the common moral qualities, and so far as one could see they had no perception of the underlying realities. This was treated dramatically, the boy acting, for example, a conceited boy, followed by the impersonation of the modest, the generous, etc.

Then there is the card encyclopædia. This is to X

the real centre of all things, the visual interpreter, the provider of associational links between the different aspects of man and of nature, the referee for most difficulties. It contains pictures enough to illustrate five hundred books, and with practice a boy can find any picture in from 12 to 16 seconds. Bobby's average time was twelve, and X's seven seconds. It is an index of few exclusions, and it gives you the narrowly utilitarian as well as the historical, the geographical, the scientific, and the literary. It is a descriptive as distinguished from a defining dictionary (for which the children were not ready). Thus if we want to find out what it is to "emerge," we find not only a picture of the action, but the words "He was EMERGING from, or coming out of the cupboard."

You can turn up "Sixteenth Century" and find portraits, historical scenes, facsimile documents, and the like—pictures enough to illustrate for the period a dozen books of history. If you look up Leeds you will find a little map with a fat arrow leaving no doubt as to where Leeds is, and the succeeding pictures will show you that Leeds has some association with the sheep farms of Australia, just as Sheffield has with the penknife and scissors symbolically introduced.

This index is housed in 48 index drawers, and contains between 12,000 and 14,000 cards. X dreams of the day when every school will have a giant card index, largely contributed to by the boys, and to which they will at all times have free access. One word: Not only picture postcards and cuttings from magazines must be inserted, but the booklover must bring himself to slash books which he would not sacrifice in a less worthy cause. After all the books which will be useful are no longer printed by mere hundreds, and the

desecration is not really the sin it would have been even fifty years ago—though X would have done it even then. The advantage of a card-index lies in its elasticity, in regard to general capacity for indefinite expansion, the power to repeat under different headings, and the possibility of suspending the index word on the card till it takes its logical place in a sentence. In regard to the last point, all that is necessary is to make the index-word so prominent as to leave no room for mistake. “Reign of Queen ELIZABETH” is quite as good technically, and much better practically, than “ELIZABETH, Reign of Queen.”

When Ebenezer came to us he could just read with an effort “The cat is on the tree,” and could just write the first two words of that rather unenterprising sentence. His index, which he called his “Indek” did the rest. One of the grown-ups had been rather troubled that Ebenezer knew nothing about the order of the letters in the alphabet, and set to work to interest him in the accomplishment of repeating the letters. X saw that Ebenezer was bored, and switched both off. Then came the index, and the alphabet was forgotten, until Ebenezer, to his own, and everybody else’s surprise rattled through the letters as rapidly as if they had been the first twenty-six numerals.

What an “indek” it was! Ebenezer only gradually learned to cut his cards (pieces of brown paper) within an inch or two of the rectangular, and the feverish writing was at first a mixture of script, printed capitals of all shapes and sizes, and those queer transpositions of letters to which children, especially Ebenezer, are so addicted. But the little man meant business, and every time that he gave the least trouble you might be quite sure that something had gone wrong with his

"indek." Every penny went in buying parts of the Harmsworth's *Encyclopædia* to cut up, and even Christmas Day did not tempt him away from the "indek" of his heart. When it came to leaving, he sobbed out to X that he wanted to leave it to other boys (whom X expected owing to the break-up of the charity). Ebenezer now writes jolly little letters to X. He taught himself to write so as to be able to make his "indek."

The others followed, one by one, rather to the chagrin of Ebenezer, who thought his idea entitled to protection from infringement. (Boys have an unwritten patent law, which they habitually break.) Bobby was then eleven, and he soon made his index a model, through his well-made boxes (all the children made these things for themselves) and his growing sense of appropriate classification. The "big index" was always consulted on matters of spelling, etc. Gradually the older boys came to work on the "big index," and Bobby, now better versed than X in the naming of living creatures, was made responsible for all matters of natural history.

For poor children such an index is a gift of the gods. Most of them have not seen the sea, and they see it now in all its moods, as well as ships of all ages, sea-beasts prehistoric and otherwise, and every imaginable thing they could expect to find arising out of this one concept. And if we suggest that water is a kindred subject they will find pictures grouped to represent water as the friend of man and water as his foe; flooded, frozen, raging, placid, turning machinery or destroying ships. Thus the boy is all the time building up in his unconscious mind pictures so associated that he will grow up with the sense of realities,

and have an endless store of imagery, the food which child has to give to man to make him a creative and fertile thinker.

A visitor from a camp of industrial school boys came in to-day—a medical inspector with deep interest in education, who had heard of us. He delighted X by telling him that boys in industrial schools are no longer locked in. They can run away if they want to, so of course hardly ever do. He watched X's boys at their work, and asked them many little playful problems, on which the children gave the free unbiassed child's reply, so that they were nearly always right. As he went away the inspector told us how different these children were from the ordinary product of the schools. "Words are so real and full of meaning to them. The children themselves are full of reality," he said. And that was all that X would have wished him to say. But X was glad that he was a medical inspector with a love of education and not a school inspector, probably without it.

"Why don't you learn to dance?" X asked the children one day. "Who's going to teach us?" said one of them. "As usual," replied X, and off they went, some to the piano and some to find the lady cook who played it so well.

"I just want you to do what the music tells you. What you do is sure to be beautiful, so go ahead, and don't be afraid." Bobby and Nelly, who was still with us, were good from the start. By the fifth afternoon of this natural eurhythmics, and without a further word from X, they were turning out such exquisite movements as would have made a paid teacher green

with envy. When Chopin's Funeral March came on one of them lay dead, while the others, in time to the music, strewed leaves upon the body. The next moment, the lady cook being of a Celtic temperament, changed suddenly to a Spring Song, and in a moment the children were planning, as they went, mazes of light and pretty movements, passing through leafy arches, prancing to the fortissimo and fluttering lightly about to the piano, as though they had most of them been stage-managed for a year.

"What do the schoolmasters mean by 'habits of laziness'?" X asked one day. "It's only a sick boy who is lazy for long together. If a boy is healthy and resting, leave him alone. He wants the rest, and will work all the better presently. That is, if the work gives his natural activities a chance. If he is merely being bored by a grown-up voice he has the same right to go to sleep that I have at a dull lecture or sermon, or rather more because he has more life in him than I have, and the non-vital is more shocking to his nature. In the free school I have always found a physical cause, and cured the trouble through that." X has had to face disorder, never laziness. What is the cure for disorder? Well, psychic sickness is more complex than physical, and always dates far back. It is all traceable to early suppressions. X first tries the shock of extreme gentleness, and generally this is enough. The next stage may be the homœopathic shock, although X has repented his own deliberate destruction of a valued book of his in order to free the soul of a boy from an impulse to destroy. The nerve shock on the children was altogether too great, and he never repeated the experiment, the idea of which he got from Mr. Homer Lane, whose children were, of



course, much older and less nervously reactive. But the principle of "heaping coals of fire" with proper adaptation to the age of one's children is quite the best thing X knows in face of an acute crisis of disorder. It ought to be widely known, and it is the opposite of the general opinion, that children of the poorer classes are infinitely more nervous than children from comfortable homes. Some of the difficulties X had to face would not have existed with children of a calmer and more ordered upbringing. All these difficulties passed eventually, and the calm and peace of the last four or five months told a tale of happy transference of many a nervous obsession.

Little Jack was the most difficult. A phthisical boy with a nervous system as sensitive as raw and bleeding flesh, he would pass into fits of such uncontrolled rage as would spread terror around him. Sometimes X would have to hold him for a brief moment, calling to the others to run away from him. (Never hold a maddened child for one second longer than is necessary, and even then do all you possibly can to calm him.) To make a painful story short, X would finally explain to him when he was calmer that it was really a sickness of his and would watch for every improvement and rejoice with him over it. At the same time merely to strengthen his will he told Jack that he did not seem to care for his freedom, and that if he showed that he could not fit into things he had better go to a place better fitted to him. This and the gradual rationalization of his conduct served to calm him, and he was able to go first for days and then for weeks without these fits of really terrifying rage.

But even in those rather dark days there were consolations. Georgie would look on wistfully, and a little

note would be put in X's hand : " Don't be so sad : it will all come right."

Jack was not only a bundle of nerves but he was strangely unresponsive to his freedom. He was an extreme counterpart to the Rogers of earlier pages. Like so many sensitive people of all ages he was not sensitive to the feelings of others. He would take all and give nothing. He was grasping, and had been very cruel. He was the last to show any consideration for anyone. But even he was inspired on that first night that everyone suddenly seized the full meaning of freedom. His eyes glistened as he said : " It's wonderful. I feel so different to-night. But I can't put it into words." Poor Jack ! X wishes he could have found freedom earlier.

X wishes this tale to be told because the nervous boy will crop up even in the school for the children of the more fortunate. It would be obviously unfair to lay undue stress upon it as a criticism upon a particular system of education. X remembers a boy in one of the best of orthodox schools who ran amok with a knife. He escaped expulsion by the skin of his teeth. These cases are plainly abnormal, and it would be juster to put the stress upon Jack's cure than on his disease.

Anyhow these tragedies were merely interludes between light and happy and fruitful days of quiet growth. Even if it had not been so, X says that he would still have been in the right. These old suppressions, if they do not come to light and undergo transference, breed horrors all a boy's life, sometimes in hidden ways but always inevitably.

" It's always Christmas," said Georgie one night. He was the boy who began a poem with " What a

funny old world it is," and elected to learn Esperanto, and talked it as a native would, if there could be such a thing, in about six weeks. Esperanto is good for elementary school children, says X, for everybody wants a second language as a means of comparison with his own, and it is very easy. The effect on the boys was very striking, and before they left they were writing letters to boys in half a dozen different countries.

X and the staff attended a funeral last night. It was Jacky's. Jacky was John's beloved rabbit. The bell was tolled and we all felt sad. The burial was carried out by the light of the boys' home-made lanterns. They stood silent for a long time over the grave, and John remained still longer, and crept in silent and tearful to his tea. Everyone passed him things that night.

#### (5) *The Basis of Real Knowledge*

The pedantic view of knowledge will bear little close examination. The brain is a very human organ, as we ought to expect it to be. It respects and remembers the frivolous, the outrageous, the absurd ; it tends to wipe out from its surface mere figures and formulæ that have no backing or accompaniment of more purely human association.

The pompous, the mechanically minded, the mere scholar have been apt to suppress the emotional, the personally coloured, the humanly alive, or it has been suppressed in them early in life. With them the associational links must still pass through the irrelevant, for even their mentality cannot subsist without the linking of the essential with the accidental

—but the really or apparently inconsequent from long habit and through these suppressions is hidden from the conscious, or at the least brushed aside as soon as it begins to obtrude itself. There is in fact a conscious dissociation of the subject of study and the general content of the mind.

To what X calls the free mind, which he considers the great and supreme mind, it is otherwise. The processes are here far less specialized, and the subject of study is much more closely interrelated with other fields of interest. The boy whose mind is pleased with the colour of William Rufus's hair may have, other things being equal, better mental potentialities than a boy in whom the visual image is less predominant and even though that boy may have a far better apparent grip, for the time being, of the formal facts of the reign. The free mind, if it concentrates at all, does so from a rich store of varied imagery, while the un-free mind—the typical mind of the examinee—combines formula with formula and fact with fact, but does not bring to its work that intensity of varied associations, sensory and emotional, present in the less formalized mind. For the moment the inferior type wins—but in the long run it goes under, humanly and as a vital reality, even though it is able to find formal and mechanical fields for the exercise of its narrower powers.

As we mostly carry with us the particular suppressions to which I have referred, we tend in the greatest number to prefer the formalized and essentially restricted mind, because it is in our interest—though we may not consciously so put it to ourselves—to encourage our own type of mentality and to condemn that which, if encouraged, would outstrip us in fertility of ideas and in constructive imagination.

The consequence of this state of things is that we elevate a superficial simulacrum of an unattainable "thoroughness" in the detail of knowledge at the expense of a comprehensive grip of and a penetrating insight into its inner meaning. For the sake of a respectable appearance we claim to prefer the prophets of our day to their secretaries and stenographers, but in practice the prophets receive the kicks and the stenographers the ha'pence, not only materially, but in the unconscious depths of the common mind.

The natural child and the man of genius are creatures of imagery, of quick grasp of the salient, and have contempt for the dead and meaningless bones of knowledge that appeal most to the commonplace because they are easily docketed and referred to when wanted.

Let us take as a concrete example the Spanish Armada, and grant that A (what X calls the free mind) and B (the formalizing and examinee mind) have both encountered that event, each in his own way. To B there are 132 vessels (accent on the 132), of which only four were galleys, and four galleasses (B accepts the names for what they are worth, and memorizes them carefully). They are very large and lumbering vessels (B thinks "lumbering" a useful word, and makes it his own). He goes on to comparative tonnage, and remembers all the time that they were Spanish, and that they came this way in the year 1588. A is interested in the pageantry of it all. He recalls pictures of those massive, carved hulls, and sees them crowding the horizon. He joins in the game of bowls, and his mind flies to the crudely luxurious court and a befrilled and womanly and yet strangely masculine queen, and so on, and so on. B learns the precise issues at stake and catalogues them ;

A is irritated by the folly of such an adventure, and classes it with other follies, but reserves a detailed consideration of the politics of it until they shall be better within his reach. To B Drake is what his book says he is, to A he is a shaggy-bearded, fascinating old sea-dog, dressed up incongruously in fine clothes and evidently pretending, in the picture he has seen, to be a very graceful fellow. He does not know the date within twenty years, but he knows, and B does not, what sort of life these Elizabethan seamen led, the look of the castles, the colour of the court, the inner meaning (found by his intuition) of an age of poetry and adventure. Which is the better as the foundation for real and living knowledge? Remember that B is not stopping where A stops. Not only do bowls help him to history, but history helps him to see that there may be a symbolic meaning even in bowls. His imagery of those unwieldy but still small ships compares in his rapidly moving mind with the shipping of a later day: he gets a telling example out of his own mind of the meaning of the material progress of civilized living. He asks himself why people no longer bow as even shaggy-bearded old Drake had to bow. His mind is working to every corner. It is "wandering" enough to reduce his masters to despair, but he who would kill such a mind or turn it into B's commits a crime against the growth of truth, of beauty and even eventually of mere efficiency. Such a mind only appears shallow or superficial to those who are too far gone in shallowness even to see a depth of a different sort from, a better sort than, their own.

Even the bootmaker cries out for imagery in his workers. An ideal whether in boots or in mankind ultimately depends on an image. In fact vivid and

correct imagery is essential to real efficiency in every calling. To the physician abnormality can only be measured by a comparison with the picture of normal organs, and the first cry of the efficiency school of business, having taken counsel with the psychologists, is for minds richer in the power to plan visually.

Visualization and compulsion do not agree. The essence of strong sensory or emotional images is that they shall be the spontaneous product of a freely acting brain. And it so happens that boys rich in the power of imagery fit very badly into the school system. And as they are the creators in embryo it is evident that we have here a very disastrous state of affairs. Indeed, it is so obvious that it is hardly imaginable that a scientific age can long encourage such a destruction of the most vital element in the community.

But verbal methods are so deeply seated in our educational system that the fight for reform is sure to be prolonged and arduous. In condemning the present product of our schools, we are condemning that of the immediate past which provided the world with its masters. It is hardly likely that, no matter how much truth there may be in the contention that most of these men have not reached the human ideal, they will admit it to themselves, much less proclaim it to the world. It has been said, I don't know with what justice, that it is in law a worse slander to represent a man as a fool than as a rogue. It is on this principle, one supposes, that people are so much readier to admit their moral than their mental inferiority. But even this noble sacrifice of *amour propre* would be worth making if it would help to save an appalling waste of creative material.

The relevancy of this subject to preceding pages dealing with reform of method will be immediately apparent. It will have occurred to more than one mind that while such ways of evoking the real inner nature of a child, and allowing him to be vital and spontaneous had obvious advantages, they would offer the parallel disadvantage of allowing a more desultory and superficial education than that now prevailing. The foregoing estimate of the normal procedure may throw some light on our attitude in this regard. To the mind of X and those who worked with him the supremely important things to secure were a rich and varied mental background and a strong concentrative interest. He has never thought it a tragedy for a child, having for his present purposes exhausted all his interest in Joan of Arc jumped without apparent logical connexion to the study of the life of Napoleon. Childhood is a long business at the worst. There is time to fill in the outlines of the most unfinished picture. A child is not a passive machine to set working out human knowledge by the yard; he was a living mind impatient to build up a store of imagery, to weave it into the general fabric of his brain. The result was not, I suppose, so examinable as B's—but that there was a rich “mental content,” and a vivid and free play of the mind on the essentials of knowledge, was apparent in the daily life of children who a few months before had a mental background mostly reflecting the mean streets of Battersea or Paddington. The synthesis was not that of the book. It was the child's own, woven out of pictures and talks and books and experience. But the best of it, as will at long last be proved to us and to them, was the richness of its imagery.



## CHAPTER III

### THE CALL OF THE FUTURE

#### (I) *Signs of the Times*

It is plain that each new age demands a new sort of man for its ideal as well as its material interpretation, and for the furtherance of both its material and ideal interests. Not only do the social "throw-backs" fail to survive in the world of selling and of machinery, but they fail to present to their times eternal truth and wisdom in a guise that is either useful or understood. They are out of harmony with the best in the new world about them, and disharmony can only breed disharmony. Ideally the teacher must look far ahead, but before he does even that he must face his own prepossessions and prejudgments and recognize them for what they are worth. Nothing is commoner, nothing more dangerous in the human make-up than the failure to see the coming of something that would not especially appeal to us if it came. The converse must also be guarded against. We often have little more reason to expect things to happen than a mere desire that they should. That means that both dislike and desire are apt to defeat a correct analysis of present conditions as a means of forecasting the future.

But it is also true that absorbed interest is necessary to an analysis sufficiently complete to have real value. This must be an interest in the future and not an interest

attaching to those isolated factors in it on which we are apt to fix our attention because of our own limited personal and professional habits of thought and of volition.

While making all allowance for this danger, which applies rather to the detail than to the main issues of education, we may very well attempt to anticipate the most general prospects facing the world, in so far as they affect the interests of the child.

The movement for much greater leisure for the manual worker has already made considerable headway, and it is unlikely that it has reached its limits. The recognition of this probability should give great force to the arguments of those who have long urged that education ought to train for leisure as well as for livelihood. But looked at from another point of view it may well open up a much wider prospect. The number of people in occupations of their own choice is comparatively small, if we include in the meaning of choice a clear desire, free from the pressure either of persons or of circumstances. If one had to fit in an ideal to the possibilities of the case it is that there should be an effort to secure more frequent instances in which people would follow, where necessary, and where desirable, a double career, that to which they were driven by economic necessity, and that to which they were inclined by their individual natures and by the history of their development. If working hours are generally reduced, as they may well be, to six hours a day, many will find a new chance to turn their personal interests into a professional or semi-professional channel. Shortened hours (it must be remembered that we are discussing possibilities impartially and without any reference to the desirability

of their realization) will leave a margin, that is to say, which will enable a man to do both work which he cares little about in his nominal working hours, and to carry on a hobby interest in his nominal leisure hours. It is hardly impossible that the day may come when certain callings, such as the actor's, will become a sort of hybrid affair between the professional and the now trained and efficient amateur. There may well be fresh scope for all sorts of artistic handicrafts, and work of invention and research, once men have been freed by the earnings of their economically necessary hours of work to turn to occupations of more personal appeal. There will also be those who while taking a lesser but still some interest in such work as a hobby, will be attracted by the hope of earning at least an appreciable amount of "pocket money." It seems to the author that if there is any foundation for these anticipations, they give further weight to the general argument for giving much more scope to the natural activities, and more play to the natural interests of the child. The author holds that with something like the spirit of the work described in the preceding pages introduced into our schools, we would secure both greater concentration on work that was not peculiarly suitable to the individuality of the child—this through the expansion of his natural powers of attention—and almost certainly joyful absorption in that which was.

Another thing that can be predicted of the future is increasing variation in the civilized environment. Fresh instruments of locomotion, and improvements in those already existing, will no doubt bring about further and much more rapid means of inter-communication. This will entail need for a more elastic

and comprehensive social attitude. The race as always, indeed, will be to the adaptable. The present school, whatever else it may be and do, cannot be accused of training people to be adaptable. The author has lived nine years in different countries outside England, and he has never heard even their best friends accuse them of that. An active childhood is full not only of potential adaptability, but shows its power of adaptation in its everyday life. Its interests are wide and its activities diverse. At the same time the encouragement of analysis of ideas, and the analysis of ideas which is involved implicitly in deep natural concentration, should make children educated with much greater scope for their natural interest and methods of work, fit in much better to a changing world than those educated on more traditional lines.

We may well anticipate a continuance of the divergence of opinion on the question of the wisdom of employing force to further social and national aims. It is quite possible that there will at first be a very strong reaction towards the employment of violent means to secure the ends both of the community and the individual. Habits formed in and by war are difficult to break. But it would be cynical and cruel, perhaps the worst crime that man could commit, to educate its childhood with that idea in its mind. At any rate the sort of education that this book advocates would, as the boy Eric implied, work in an opposite direction. Apart from the kind of world into which children are going to enter, it is surely our duty to educate them to fit in with its best and not with its worst ideals, to plan that, as far as the matter lies in our hands, they shall be leaders in the cause of progress, and not followers in the work of further destruction.

If historical analogy is worth anything it foretells that a social or national cataclysm will be followed, though at a distance, by a revolution in thought, and by an outburst of creative activity. This means scope for originality and a call for genius. That there is especial scope even now for leaders of genius, has been agreed on every hand, but the whole world is searching, and never finds. And if it goes on looking among the men of prestige, the admitted successes of school and public life, it will, unless by an extraordinary chance, look long. Change education so as to let the child live and breathe freely, and grow up as a creator, and that reproach will be removed.

The strife of the future will need gentleness and sympathy and the spirit of wise and calm co-operation—and where seek co-operation if not in the co-operative school? It will need presence of mind and resourcefulness to meet changing moods and habits—and where seek more hopefully than in a school existing to promote initiative? It will need receptivity of ideas, and surely a child who is from morning to night satisfying his own curiosity is showing and educating his powers of receptivity.

And there is one other point so tremendously important that no one, once having seen it, dare refrain from urging it with all his might. It is so simple that it is the feeling that the obvious so often passes unseen alone permits its statement here. It is the danger of not changing. Everybody seems to see the danger of change. But surely there is no greater danger than not admitting the need for change. We all see it in the little material things of life:—the change of position that saves us from the express train, the change of elevation that saves us from being shot, the change of

dwelling that saves us from crippling rheumatism, the change of town, which, while it sometimes turns a man to a beggar, may also change a beggar to a millionaire. But once we found an institution all our freedom of judgment goes. We suddenly begin to see only one side of the case—the danger of change. We are at once haunted by ghosts from the past—ghosts who talk just as irrelevantly as a ghost versed only in stage coaches who presented himself to a man in the path of a motor-car and told him that there was no need to hurry.

To many of us the world is devitalized, dying of inanition. Authority has succeeded in providing us with a little meat and margarine, but it has no message for the mind or the soul. The schools have given us heroes to face death, but hardly one to show us how to face life. And few seem to see the inner meaning of the tragedy, that the schools of the world are guilty with the innocent guilt of the little boy who killed his playmate, and looked on wonderingly while the mother wept. For centuries they have taught doctrines that could have ended no other way—doctrines leading with inevitable logic to this one conclusion. Latterly they have all ridiculed "Prussian discipline," but all for forty years have aped most things in Prussian schools except the adoration of the Kaiser. They tell me that the changes in schools are so wonderful, but I see children still leaping mechanically to their places on the elementary school benches, and standing like Prussian soldiers on parade. They tell me of growing initiative, but the "best" from our schools become first, second or third class Civil Service clerks who follow the wheels of their wretched machine as if they were doing the work of God.

I beg the pardon of the few men who are trying to do something to change all this. I have been told that they are many. I was told so long ago, in 1914 or before. It is not true. I know what a free child is. I look for free children and find them here and there, rare, half buried. You cannot hide the free child. He radiates light and inspiration from afar, but they try to bury him. Do they fear that he may save the world from the Prussian doctrine some of them preach, or the routine, dead and officialized Prussian lives they would have us lead?

And those other schools—they are not Prussian, but they are mostly dead with the death of mere convention, of fetich, of easy, herd-inspired living. Their boys will mostly be cold, calm nonentities, well practised in the stony British stare. They will never tell a lie, but what is much worse, they will be cleverly politic, evasive, compromising where there can be no compromise. Their social outlook will be narrow and unoriginal, their intelligence will be directed to pleading for orthodoxies or orthodox heresies, ~~they~~ they will accept all at the valuation of their herd.

Whatever the danger in wide and progressive change, in the direction of allowing children enormously more scope for natural activities, free co-operation and immunity from dictatorial authority, the danger has to be set against that of continuing to accept a conception of education which has brought the world to misery, and is threatening it with catastrophe. At least the old way has, and the new way has not yet failed.

### (2) *The Thin End of the Wedge*

It is plain that schools, even if they wished (which is in general very far from being the case), could not

suddenly throw off the larger portion of their disciplinary tradition, and completely emancipate both staff and boys. No sane person would make such a preposterous suggestion. Only one master in four, perhaps, would have any sympathy with the inner motive of the proposal, and even he would not hold such a sudden change good either for the idea, or for those to whom it was applied. The rest of the four, profoundly incredulous not only of the particular application, but of the underlying idea itself, would feel a half-conscious pleasure in the extreme forms of anarchy which, after the first charm of novelty had worn off, if not before, would come as the consequence of two main factors—a too sudden reaction and the lack of expert experimenters able to turn such a reaction to good account. I am thinking now, of course, of the larger schools, and particularly of those containing boys or girls over fourteen years of age.

The smaller preparatory and elementary schools, with enlightened heads already well advanced on the path to complete freedom, and having a small keen and sympathetic staff, might do best by being bold, and venturing all. If the boys were already in sympathy with their teachers they would never "let them down" badly, and they would soon have their own valuable suggestions to make of ways by which it would be possible to cover the period of transition. The headmaster or headmistress of such a school, if in complete sympathy with the aim, will soon find ways, helped by teaching appliances such as those described in the foregoing pages, to put the change through not only without serious risk to order, but with the quick acceptance of the new ways from his children.



For the larger schools we shall have to choose a wedge, but only special circumstances, and particularly the adaptability of the staff, the hitherto nature of the discipline and the prevailing spirit of the place as influenced by those two factors, can decide with what degree of force and rapidity that wedge can be driven home.

In the first place every large school with the means at its disposal should employ at least one recognized experimenter. Generally speaking, a large staff will offer ready at hand not less than one master who is only awaiting the invitation to experiment. As an immediate ideal the experimental teachers should number something like one in five of the ordinary staff. These men should be treated as, and should be expert at their work, and whatever their age should be paid a salary equal to the senior specialists in "subjects." (In an orthodox system where the hierarchy counts for so much it is important that the unorthodox element should have its "prestige-suggestive" value, without which, as social psychology shows us, it is difficult to secure wide acceptance of an idea.) The experimental staff should be given *carte blanche* to work in their own way.

Simultaneously with this the ordinary masters should be recommended to follow the experiments closely and with sympathy. They might well be asked to endeavour to introduce certain devices suggested by the headmaster and aiming at making the work of the boys more active and independent. Partnership and individual and group work might at first be allowed to assume such and such a proportion of the total number of hours.

The example of the Headmaster, while its value

in regard to the more reactionary members of his staff may well be exaggerated, may count for very much. His own more modest, more human, lighter and more trustful attitude is likely to reflect itself in a less authoritative manner on the part of his assistants, who will otherwise presently find themselves embarrassing him in such a way as only the pachydermatous could persist in.

The Headmaster might well take a direct and detailed interest in the methods applied in the literary and other creative work of the school. He would do well, for example, to treat all such work as exempt from the ordinary prescriptive principles of ordinary "subject" work. The boys should write poems or descriptions or plays or stories or novels as they prefer and according to their own ideas. Similarly with drawing, painting and musical composition.

- Where boys of adolescent and anti-adolescent ages find themselves in the same school, steps should immediately be taken to abolish the government of the younger by the older boy, who has never understood, and until the spirit of schools is far more scientifically inspired than now cannot possibly understand, the psychology of a boy of 13 or 14. Superficially 17 is in power of sympathetic understanding nearer to 13 than is 27 or 37, but actually facts point to a contrary conclusion. The "unconscious" of a boy contains elements which lead him to despise and misunderstand the phase of growth from which he has just passed. The government of older boy by older boy entails no change; the government of younger boy by younger boy is a logical continuation of the custom of the preparatory school.

During the period of transition the misdemeanours

due to inhibition of children's work-play activities will be looked at as sympathetically as possible, and the "difficult" boy may well be turned over for increased scope in the experimental classes and in the workshop. The graver offences will be treated as symptoms of nervous disease, and as requiring analytic or suggestional treatment or both. Eventually, I believe a few of the largest Public Schools will combine to support a medico-psychological clinic for the boys they would otherwise have to expel.

The headmaster whose insight into psychology has been diminished by his excessive concentration on sport, theology, or the history of education, is a public danger when he lays on the birch. His appalling ignorance of the possible consequences of his act throw a brilliant light on the small educational qualifications still expected of such men. The power to inflict corporal punishment should not be left in the hands, either of headmasters or of magistrates. A flogging is, in the light of modern psycho-medical investigation, a rather more perilous proceeding than the administration of potent drugs. Its effect upon the sexual life is probably adverse in at least one case in every four, and that apart from the numbers of cases of nerve shock, and morbid suppressions of the occasion of the flogging. If the headmaster "cannot keep order without flogging," he should be regarded as putting in of his own free will the clinching argument for his supersession by a man fit to run a school in the twentieth century.

But as it would not be necessary to tell this to the sort of headmaster who would be likely to put his school in the van of educational progress, we need not discuss the matter further, although, in the public interest, the author takes this opportunity of urging on parents

the grave danger of sending children to schools in which flogging is an integral part of the system. The exact nature of the dangers involved is not of a character to be dealt with, even if we had the space, in a book intended for the general reader, who for further information may consult any of the larger works on medical psychology, or if they wish to get at the widest implications, on those on psycho-analysis, under the headings of "sadism" (often unconsciously present in the flogger) and masochism (sometimes even consciously present in the flogged boy or girl) for the most immediate and critical dangers. The psycho-analytic writings will give a proper sense of the danger of all forcible suppressions.

The whole weight of the adult staff of a school should be on the side of "rationalizing," of exposing the unconscious fetich motives inspiring the sillier side of *esprit de corps*, not, as is so often the case, of charging it with further fire from their own emotional "complex"-living. A free-minded and intelligent boy would have either too much intelligence or too great a love of truth to believe, as the Public School-boy so often does, that other schools of which he knew little or nothing were places only fit for clowns or satyrs. The absurdity is not vastly important in itself, for it is so obvious that most boys half realize it themselves. But it is also symptomatic of a whole attitude to life—the attitude that makes later on for all sorts of social and intellectual prejudices, wrong measurements of ideas and of people and communities, and defeats that fair and disinterested analysis which would be enough of itself to make a saner and a better world. This fetichistic tendency, which is really none the better for being primitive, should be insen-

sibly, and by more truly co-operative living as well as through the subtle and unaggressive suggestion of the grown-ups, transferred to a wider and more ideal form of *esprit de corps*, the *corps* having some specific aim for the general attainment. Above all its inspiration should be derived rather from future hopes than from past achievement. Very old men may drink, in champagne if they will, to the memory of the eighteenth century ; the young should naturally drink, in ginger-beer if they can, to the health of their own common projects and schemes and ideals. Those ideals will, of course, often take on the best that the past has to give them ; but the eyes of a great boy look to the future of himself and his fellows, to a world in which beauty appears in the terms of wonderful change and progress, and not in the mumbling of old watchwords. He sometimes despises inordinately the past as he sees it now, because its claims are exaggerated so constantly in his hearing, but give him the chance to look into the vistas of the future, and the past will become to him a primitively beautiful thing giving him fresh food for his dreams, and inspiring his plans.

In the matter of general social living, the boys and girls should be encouraged to do some at least of the household work necessary to providing for their own needs. Cook's son or Duke's son is the better for making his own bed, laying his table, waiting on his equals and inferiors as well as superiors in age. The recreative side should not be limited to such a formalized and unimaginative field of compulsory physical effort as now obtains, more especially until more generous allowance is made for manual activities in school hours. The ordinary games are far too crude

to educate the manual centres in the brain, centres which are now known to be so intimately connected with the thought processes, especially through the speech centres, that it may be said without exaggeration that completely harmonious mental development is alone possible in a boy who has the opportunity to work with his hands. The old "playing fields" fiction is still more comical if one remembers that Wellington spent most of his schooldays lounging against an oak-tree in the playground, with his hands in his pockets, watching other boys at their games. I do not propose this method of educating great generals, because among other reasons I feel that generals are not the people we most want just now.

Perhaps if I had been a fancier of generals I would have revealed the facts of the case so as to suggest a possible method of multiplying the kind. As it is, some headmasters may relinquish the habit of having their boys' pockets sewn up, so as to have a supply of generals ready for the next war. These apart, there is some chance that presently adults will allow boys to have more individual rights in deciding the direction of their physical life.

The compulsory watching of cricket and football is an absurdity, though most boys have much less grievance about the football than the cricket. I have known cases in which boys while looking on at a cricket match were reproved by masters for talking about other things, and not watching the game!

Thus far about the situation in so far as it concerns the headmaster. Now for the Authorities. Here are a few little recommendations, none of which may ever be followed, but which are quite seriously intended to be suggestive.

(1) A department of Research and Experiment to be maintained at the Board of Education. This Department to have a specially qualified inspector, who shall inspect all schools claiming to be experimental.

(2) That a Committee of the Board shall investigate the possibility of applying tests suitable to a school run on individualized lines, and in which there is no common curriculum, such tests to be of a boy's general intellectual power, of his general mental content, of the strength of his concentration relative to his own interests and relative to interests suggested to him, and of his readiness to acquire further knowledge.

(3) That the same Committee be further recommended to report on the desirability of introducing in place of qualifying or any other examinations for "young persons" tests rather of general mental content, elasticity of mental process and general suitability to the particular calling or purpose for which the examination or test is designed.

(4) That the Board shall grant to approved persons or bodies special grants for the purpose of supporting experimental schools or classes.

(5) That steps be taken to secure the appointment of a parliamentary committee with power to call evidence from specialists on nervous disease, and others, with a view to determining whether and what restrictions should be placed upon the use of corporal punishment on children and "young persons."

(6) That a permanent exhibition of educational toys, teaching apparatus and specimens of children's unaided creative work be established in connexion with the South Kensington Museum, or in some other convenient place in London.

(7) That special grants be made from time to time,

through a Society for the Promotion of Educational Research or otherwise, for attaching to expeditions or sending on expeditions independently, qualified educationists or psychologists charged with the work of observing the various methods of educating children among primitive races: of studying the extent and effect in different environmental regards of the freedom allowed the child; and of observing analogies and differences relative to our own methods used in the upbringing of children.

I fear an official of the Board of Education might say that the wedge had here been driven well in. But surely there is not one of these proposals that does more than urge enquiry on the one hand and the securing of a fair field on the other. At present nobody knows how he stands, and it is high time that the experimenter was either admitted to the same position he holds in regard to the other sciences, or else given full and convincing reason why he is not.

### (3) *For Those Who are Ready*

Now I would speak to those who are prepared to go the end of the road. That is only a figure of speech, as they will well know, for the spirit of freedom stretches far away beyond our horizon, away into infinity. But they are free themselves, and ready for the adventure whatever the cost in mockery or in toil. They have drunk deep of life in some way or another, or they could not still be here when the rest of our party has floated away through the wide-open door. They have stood up to life and they find it good and lovely. They have found that even beneath the mud of life runs a great wide river of purest freshening water. To them the beauty in the soul of man but



needs release. And to them the voice of the freed child speaks out from the depths of the eternal.

X comes in and tells them of the Science Clubs—so much more than Science Clubs—founded by Jones minor and others so that they might learn science in their leisure time, and so that they might set the message of freedom going “all round the world.” No grown-up had a voice in it till it had reached a healthy growth. They felt the call for science, and no science was taught in their school, and so these little men did the thing that came so naturally to them—they set to work to teach themselves. Spontaneously (showing how right Mr. Caldwell Cook was) they worked by each choosing a speciality, and lecturing on it to the rest. Who could ever forget Graham’s wonderful little descriptions of the weasel or the badger in a natural history lecture? What a wonderful mixture of love and exactitude, of science and sheer poetry! You would find it in no book, just as it was—not even in White’s *Selborne*. Then how Jones minor took up Physics and taught himself so well from a book, which really frightened X, that he was able to make everyone, X included, wonder why there were no Jones minors on the teaching staffs of schools! The Clubs were to be free, and this they took to include that all should be free from ridicule. They invited little nine-year-olds from the First Year, and because the nine-year-olds were keener on the arts than on the sciences, they widened the scope of their constitution, and encouraged finally literature and painting as well as science. But while there were no age exclusions, there was no admission for those they did not consider “free.”

The spirit of those clubs permeated the school.

The Head came in to a meeting and asked to be the bridge between the old and new. He talked of it in his beautiful way in chapel ; he and Z said wonderful things to the boys about the inner meaning of it all. And several of them went off to their Public Schools resolved to await the time to spread the light there too.

The leaders of these Clubs had all been through X's classes, but all that they had taken from these was the name "Clubs." Some time before, after trying various forms of autonomy, X had, after thrashing things out with his boys, decided to call his classes "clubs"—a word which appealed both to him and the boys by its great elasticity. The French Club will serve as an example. It had its boy Président, Vice-Président, Secrétaire, Crieur Publique (whose "cri" was really made with a little bell, when the Président or other official wished to speak), and so on, there being as many offices as there were persons. The Head became "Président Honoraire," another French master "Visiteur Honoraire," and X himself was "Conseiller." Never was there more real self-government in this world. X took a back seat and did what he was asked and nothing more. Once, when he couldn't make his voice prevail when he felt it important that it should, in order to fit in with outside requirements, he formally resigned, and stayed away for a whole day and a half. Meanwhile the work went on as before and X received letters written anonymously (such is boys' delicacy) pressing him to return. All came right again, and X, while still keeping in the background, was always listened to when he spoke.

That is where a Head comes in. What would happen

to a teacher in an elementary school if he acted like X? Here you have the weakness of the whole thing. You can't get the children to react naturally because of the system, and you mustn't react yourself, because of your Head or your inspector. X did react naturally. He felt deeply hurt and he went away and sulked like a bear, and prayed Heaven that all would come right soon. That sort of thing children understand; it is human, it is what they can imagine themselves doing, though for an hour and a half instead of a day and a half, for their time like their shoes is made to size. Punishments are arbitrary; natural reactions have direct relationships with their occasion. They are not, indeed, measured, but they suggest the true measure.

X is the untidiest brute alive himself, but the French Club, after a confession from him, seems to have made up its mind to profit by the terrible example he had put before them. One day the Head crept in with a lady visitor, made a sign to X not to notice him, and stood in the background. It was the end of the morning and the table was thickly strewn with books and apparatus and index drawers. The Crieur Publique looked at the clock and rang his bell. The work of clearing up followed with much zeal and concentration, and finally the last thing was placed in its drawer. Then the Head came forward. "Seventeen seconds," he said, as he put his watch back in his pocket. X tells this very commonplace story with two purposes in view, to show that the things one wants can be got without preaching, and that example need not be either the best or the worst of precepts.

The following was written by X in 1914 :—

The qualities to be possessed by the new school-

master at his best are not difficult to sum up. He will be at once the modest, patient, scientific observer and the friend of his pupils ; he will know how to be silent when there is no need to speak ; he will be a natural (never a hypocritical) diplomat, with an instinct for saying with sincerity that which is psychologically apt ; he will be profoundly an optimist with regard to individuals and to the mass ; from the goodness of his heart he will make each boy feel that no boy is more honoured or more trusted than the boy before him.

These are general requirements—for all that is mere “ method ” can be learned easily enough. Now are such men common ? Certainly not at present. Will they become common ? The best of the new type will always show a clearer lead over their fellows than did the best schoolmaster of the old order over his, but there are a very large number of good men ready to do fair justice to the peculiar rather than exacting requirements. And, after all, the risks of utter failure in conducting a class provided with material enabling it to work actively are much less than in conducting a class under conditions of unnatural silence and inertness.

Of all the qualifications none is more important than this “ modesty.” By this is meant scientific modesty, a sort of agnosticism with regard to the appropriate didactic method to be applied to each individual, a tendency to wait and to watch. The new psychology has little to say about “ boys.” Its business is with units, and it is ever willing that the unit should put it to school again. This sort of master will trust himself to act on no generality that cannot be made on what he sees before him at the

moment. He will claim no superiority, so that his evident superiority of experience and of mechanical efficiency may have their due and natural weight. His politeness and consideration will be unfailing (short of a violent exaggeration which might suggest irony, courtesy to boys cannot be overdone) ; he will be unceasing in his search for what has been better done, and of that which has been badly done he will say little, and that with a friendly smile ; he will be frank and communicative without "making himself too cheap" ; he will be (in a good and holy sense) the servant and not the master, and so increase his boys' respect a hundredfold.

His rôle will be to pass from child to child, encouraging, suggesting new ideas, correcting pronunciation, and last but not least circulating the new ideas he gains from his pupils—for these are often full of ingenuity and, above all, of psychological fitness.

One must not be timid about the according of a full measure of freedom. On one occasion, back before the war, when my third form was flooded with new boys, I told them in the most deliberate tone that there was "no possible hope of getting a punishment," and I never knew the sternest of actual punishments produce a more healthy or a more lasting effect. This is the form in which in two terms there was not a single boy who did not work with real enthusiasm for nine-tenths of his time. There is something challenging in a strong and vigorous declaration of this perfect immunity from external pressure, but the same words could not have the same effect on a class doomed to sit silent while the master talked.

One remark made by a little fellow of twelve in this same third form has its interest in the present

context. After a burst of excitement over some new development of partnership work, I reminded my boys that while *they* might believe, it would not be so easy to convince outsiders. The little boy of whom I write looked at me with an expression of extraordinary understanding, and said: "YOU MUST WAIT FOR US, SIR."

Whatever effect emancipationist theories may have upon the present generation of teachers, one thing is certain: they are going to attract into our ranks a new and more original type of schoolmaster. To sensitive men—and they are just the people we want under the new *régime*—there has been much that was repugnant under the old class-teaching. The rough-and-ready justice, the need to harden one's heart when one felt most pity, the application of trivial and vexatious rules, the effort to produce a uniform type in a world already so dreadfully uniform—all these things, on top of the petty irritations of the ordinary schoolmaster's life, have served to make our calling one of the least attractive to those born with what has hitherto been the curse of a delicate sympathy and a rich imagination. The new school might very well be a perpetual delight to such a man. His work will at every moment be creative; there will be a fine field for his sympathies; he will be immune from all danger of committing the once inevitable injustice. He will have before him a little world growing all the time with the wonderful growth that can be seen only when spontaneity has full play. It will be a life full of richness and beauty and endless charm for the true artist; of constant and fascinating and endlessly changing problems for the man of science. In a world of true thinkers such a prospect would be singularly

alluring, and even in this commercialized world it will not be without its attraction. Nearly all the spheres of work which offer the chance of creation or of research have been filled for the most part by men who were prepared to sacrifice their material interests to the passion of their intellectual life. Teaching may yet be another.

But even on the material side there is no way in which the public is more likely to be converted to a true appreciation of the teacher's mission than in the coming effort to revitalize the whole structure of society through its children. Mention education now, and even the father or the mother will suppress a yawn. The day is fast approaching when it will be recognized that the highest human function is the art of training the young through their own activities.

It has been said elsewhere that the spirit we shall want in our newest teachers ought to be something between the spirit of the referee at a football match and that of an enthusiastic spectator. All must be keen, all must be positive. No reproaches, no talk of punishments—or all may collapse like a house of cards. "I think it would be good fun to do this" is a good prelude, and it very rarely excites anything but an enthusiastic response. We must learn to respect every child—to watch sympathetically and only to inhibit after due and imaginative reflection. Every child works and should work in a different way. In the early stages of my experiment I interfered with different methods of work far more than I do now, I thought some questions too easy—but how often I have found my mistake, and that the natural genius of the child was superior to all conventional calculation! . . .

X has just been reading A. S. Neill's *A Dominie in Doubt*. I like what he says about concentration and the need to bring in the Unconscious to help the Conscious. That's the whole thing—that's why involuntary attention is never real concentration. And that's why so many of the people who have made themselves into something like scholars are such dead things—they have no early imagery in their minds. They live in houses which the bricklayer has left, but which have never been finished. You know that it is a real house in a sense, but you at least half see the bare bricks, and you at least half miss the paint and the hangings and the furniture. Look into your mind and see that the things that count with your real inner self have a colour, or a flavour or a scent or a form or a clear and definite formlessness. That is the test of your own education. How much of what you learned has imagery, has a sort of psycho-physical background? All that your deeper nature learned has that—all the rest is mere formula, so many figures, and letters. Notice that what you learned for yourself in early years generally has all that. And if, like me, you are sure of the fact and of all its implications, you will never stop working for a more vital and concrete education.

I believe that the mind of genius again is all like that. At school these people—the only men who grew up in this respect normal—spent their school hours in watching the flies on the window-pane or studying the pattern on the wall, and between whiles formed images of schoolmasters and boys and passing carts and cows. Their more serious education came in stolen hours of leisure reading—but the imagery and the psycho-physical background did not come from their school,



Am I clear enough? If I am not, it is torture to me, for I know that here lies the whole secret of the world's failure. The world has no mental background to turn words to things and to prevent things from becoming words.

(4) *To the Father and Mother*

To you this is no question of orthodoxy or of heterodoxy, because your child is to you no shuttlecock to be tossed here and there in the winds of mere controversy. He is the child of your being, and everything that touches him closely is a matter of life-and-death importance to your own welfare and happiness. There are those who say that parents care nothing for the details of education, and that they do not wish to know anything about that hard-sounding thing called "method." But believe me you are interested in it more than even you have realized. And more than you have realized you have a true sense of the requirements of method. How many mothers I have seen showing a sense of the deeper needs of the mental life of a child than his teachers were likely to show after he went to school, unless he had the good fortune either to meet some teacher having your instinctive grip of his nature, or some other, who by long thought had come to see that your method was right. (I write thus to you because you would not be reading this book if you were not ready for its message, and if you are ready for its message you have kept your faith in your child and have allowed your instincts to lead you along the right paths.)

You remember how wonderfully your boy taught himself in those first years of babyhood, how little

time he really wasted in training himself to be a stronger and wiser baby, a baby better fitted for the next stage in his growth towards manhood. But later on, because you had not heard of these newer views of the self-educative ways of the child, or because others treated the bigger child differently from the baby and gave them less free and natural scope, you, too, quite excusably began to expect a closer following of your will than you would if you had your time to come over again. It is the tragedy of some mothers' lives that they realize that their children would have grown up better if they had given more time to letting them struggle through their self-imposed tasks, and they blame themselves for having destroyed much of their children's natural love of work by doing things for their child when he was anxious to do them for himself. Fortunately Nature is here kinder than they think. Boys who have lost their initiative for many years can, and frequently do, recover their lost powers of working in the spirit of purposive play if they are allowed to work in the free activity described in these pages. But since it is you, the story is more likely to be this: Your boy for all the time he was with you before he went to school was full of vitality. He was asking questions from morning to night; he was constructing, imagining, comparing. He came back from school different in all sorts of subtle and in some obvious ways. His questions were fewer, his opinions less his own. He quoted others for all he once thought himself. Above all, he was "lazy" according to his report. Did you put two and two together? Why was he lazy, and why has he ceased to ask questions? In your heart of hearts you must know. Till now perhaps you have taken school for

granted. You have said to yourself that a boy must lose something to gain everything. But do you not see that he gave up almost everything to gain so far as is likely almost nothing. The questions of a boy and his will and power to make are almost the whole boy—the scientist part of him, the artist part of him, or, put together, the genius part of him. Your boy had genius, and now they are turning him to an ape.

You see it now, but you are afraid to change the plan you have mapped out. Your boy will have to make his own living, and you cannot afford to have him experimented with. Mother, it is only an experiment in the sense in which you experimented with him in those earliest years. It is Nature's own experiment, not man's. Man only turns the will of Nature to the good of your boy, to fit him through Nature's laws to the laws of progress. That other experiment that is deforming your boy, casting him in the moulds rough cast by half-savage man in ancient Egypt, and only refined and polished a little with the passing of six thousand years—that is the experiment you should fear. The mould of passivity, of fetich worship, of dull acceptance of a mass of half-understood tradition—the applying of that is the experiment which can and does kill the soul of man. That is the mould the casting in which brings men to hate and kill at the worst, to smirk and seek places and tell themselves lies at the best. It is true that there are some who pass through school uninjured and unmoulded, but note that your boy is "lazy"—either he or the mould will win. And already the mould is beginning to tell.

Now suppose you set your boy free. Suppose you put him where he will grow—where he is captain

of his own soul—where he can find out, compare, imagine and construct—surely he cannot then starve, and surely he will come back, not transformed as now, but growing in mind and body—still the boy of his babyhood, but a boy destined to help the world and make you proud and happy.

(5) *Concluding Amenities in Reply*

(1) *Of prigs and buffoons.*—X asks me to say: If there is to be a battle as to the products of the new ideals and the old, may I not declaim as much against the buffoon as my masters against the prig? For those terms, I take it, represent the extremes of our mutual recriminations. I deny the prig, and perhaps they deny the buffoon, but I do not deny that all the prigs I have ever met belonged to their system and not to ours.

(2) "*I was well beaten .°. . all the better for it.*" Sir, I really—I, I——! Sir, you're fishing!

(3) "*This sort of thing is not new.*" Then they might begin to see about what they can do with it. (The saying is no doubt meant to be a compliment.)

(4) "*It is too new to be good.*" Sir, it has been hanging for some time in the cellars. The flavour has much improved since you last refused to try it.

(5) "*I spank my boy.*" You do, sir, and I also note the other condition that so often applies—you quote a mere proceeding on your own part with an air of finality.

(6) "*What is the nation coming to?*" God knows, and you haven't yet done your worst.

(7) "*Esprit de Corps.*" All agreed. But the right *esprit* of the right *corps*, that's where the shoe pinches.

(8) "*Schools are not meant for the genius.*" Plainly not, they are mostly calculated to destroy all but the ape.

(9) "*You are too enthusiastic.*" That is the abuse of the living by the dead. I am no longer a chicken, if that is what you mean, and I have lived my way into what you call my enthusiasm—it does not float on air.

(10) "*How will they learn all that I learned?*" They can, but they won't want to. They are too dynamic, too full of adapting themselves to their rôle in life to ape either you or me. Their knowledge will be something new and vital; they have better things to get out of life than the lumber that satisfied us. We are merely apes—I beg your pardon, I should have said, I am merely an ape.

(11) "*They will be shallow.*" Shallower than us? Heaven forbid! It is hardly possible. Nature's functions never sank lower than the cerebration of some of our scholars when they leave their studies and take an omnibus or talk to you or me. And much of their scholarship itself, what is it? An endless working out of algebraical equivalents, processes almost as mechanical as breaking stones, except that the brain has undergone an adaptation to the more imposing sort of mechanism. The worst of them may be useful, but only as the navvies in their trench. The best of them somehow escaped the ape training of their schools—and have vitality. We can give you nothing that is not vital, and even our fools will be that. They'll all want to make and be doing things. They won't be so fond of chewing the cud of other people's reflexions.

(12) "*How shall we test them?*" As you test all living things. But the tests for the dead won't do.

Watch them, and enter into their lives. If they are doing and living amid a living and inspiring environment, all must be well.

(13) "*But the Post Office sorters?*" Put them to sort, of course, and keep the best. You'd get better sorters at once. Let the boy know that he has got to sort, and the geography and what-not will come in, without all this fuss. When the blockheads framed that examination they even forgot that the hand movements and quickness in reading handwriting were together worth fifty to one of mere knowledge. Sometimes the boy who comes out first in that examination must be among the worst of all possible sorters. But I suppose the good little boy in the eyes of his teachers must be allowed to reach the heaven of the sorting-room, so we ought to wait patiently for our letters.

(14) "*And the doctors?*" Ask Sir William Turner, who long ago expressed profound dissatisfaction with the qualifying examinations for medicine. I don't know what were his proposals in detail, but it is pretty evident what lines they would follow. They would no doubt be an extension of what I have proposed for the sorters. The student's powers of diagnosis and of treatment, or his operative skill in surgery, would be estimated in actual clinical practice. The student would not be examined in anatomy and physiology: his knowledge would be implied in the efficiency of his work.

(15) "*Then you cannot face the world as it is?*" Oh, yes, we can. X has had letters from hitherto backward boys who have got through examinations which they never dreamt would be within their reach, and they have attributed their success to "having learned to work in freedom." But the point is this:

if we want to wake our children from death we do not want them to fall into the sleep of death again. We aim at something better than a transitory resurrection.

(16) "*The world is not ready for it.*" Of course not. It wasn't ready for the steam-engine or the emancipation of the slave. What was it ever ready for? But never was there a moment when education had had such a terrible test, and had been found so grievously wanting.

(17) "*It will all be scrappy and indefinite.*" Dear sir, are our thoughts less scrappy or less definite because we think them out for ourselves. If you could but see into the mind of the ordinary boy, even when he is the apple of your eye and won all the scholarships that ever a boy won. What queer little crumpled-up fistfuls of hard facts in a sea of incoherencies! All the weight of mechanical association impressed to bind together that strange little concretion of matter while the rest of the mind lay fallow, except for the mechanical supplying of those subconscious links which helped him to remember the clauses of treaties by Uncle John's walking-stick or Aunt Jemima's hair! Anyhow, what has he become now? If you except his useful power of remembering the contents of Code B100/77c. and writing evasive letters to the enemies of the Government, he is now as sheer a cypher as ever entered Whitehall. His toneless voice, his weary manner and his official air are the outward and visible remains of that glory of bygone days when his Headmaster departed from all precedent on Speech Day and shook him warmly by the hand. I don't say that he would have thriven on freedom—probably not, in a marked degree. He is the trained ape, playing with his mechanical memory as an ape learns

to play with a knife and fork. But he would at least have been vital. His voice would have been fuller and richer, his eyes brighter, his manner his own. He would still have used an evidently good mechanical memory, but he would have fed it from sources of interest, involving imagery and turning things that are now formulæ and words to understood realities. He might even have been just too good for a government office. But I must try to show you what he might have learned. Well I had occasion to discuss some point of social theory with this same John Skollop Cramm. Do you think he bit even when I begged him to tell me how these theories bound up with things in history that he had stuffed himself with till he nearly burst? He admitted quite frankly that it had all meant nothing to him—the memory of it evidently had no more interest for him than Uncle John's walking-stick, and possibly less than Aunt Jemima's hair. Now with our way of doing things John Skollop Cramm would have been interested in history because he had got up against it as an unavoidable necessity to understanding all sorts of other things—apart from the fact that it would have been in the atmosphere as something having meaning and reality. He might not have learned the terms of those blessed treaties, though I think that his love of memorizing would pursue him, and he would still tend to be the mere magpie in things of the mind. But he would anyhow have been a vitalized Cramm even in history.

(18) "*Facing the difficulties of life?*" Old, old "crab." Please to read the section on "Making Things Too Easy," in Chapter I, and let me add this question addressed to you. Is the aim in making boys sit passive for five hours a day to prepare them in some



way for life? For may I point out that though I have travelled upwards of 30,000 miles and met perhaps 2,000 bores of the most varied races I have never had to accomplish this feat of having to sit silent and be talked to for five-twenty-fourths of a day and night. Or is it a sort of inoculation against boredom making you immune for lesser periods? As unpleasant questions usually appear irrelevant I will pass on. The problem is not one of finding people ready to get up against difficulties at all, for everybody has to do that or starve. The real problem is twofold—how to get people to find the difficulties that need surmounting through power of initiative, and then do them in the spirit of creative joy. If you tell me that the schools bring us to do that—well, well! But that the really free school does that even if it does nothing else that's the one thing on which I am ready to stake everything and which I can prove to anyone open to be convinced.

Well, that's that. It's not much good one gets by all the talk. The vital people don't want it, and the rest go away, and bob up with the same old questions over and over again. All in life that's worth getting comes from the positive. And all criticism that is worth while is creative and leads to construction. The merely destructive are mostly people who were once beaten for cutting open their toys, or snipping the Vicar's hat, and they bear with them all their lives the desire to cut up more or less meaninglessly. It is partly that sort of half-playful destructiveness and also the unconscious libido urging them not to see what once admitted might unsettle their thoughts or their way of living. They are the people who say:

It's all right in theory, but how would it do in practice? It must be almost a surprise to them to find that the unassailable theories of navigation do not lead ships to split on rocks or take them to an unexpected quarter of the globe.

This little book has been written in many moods, but every mood has reflected the same intense desire to help in a small way to see this thing put right. It can only be done really in the childlike, simple ardent way of deliberate creation. The author has had to write terrible sentences about such things as analytico-synthesis. But that can be forgotten now, and we can end on a simple issue—that of setting to work to build the new world city of the child. It is indeed only the simple mind that will eventually inspire the work—the child-spirit, the spirit of genius, that will feel the needs of kindred souls. Old Pompous, old Surly, and Mr. Gruff shan't be shut out, for they, too, really like the little people in their queer from-the-top-of-the-ladder kind of way, *and we all really like them*, but we and the children must whisper out some of our plans while they are doing their Latin. Above all, they must not have a hand in *building the staircases*.

Printed in Great Britain at  
*The Mayflower Press Plymouth*  
William Brendon & Son Ltd.





